

STEINER: POWERFUL ENOUGH TO CARRY WCW?

INSIDE WRESTLING

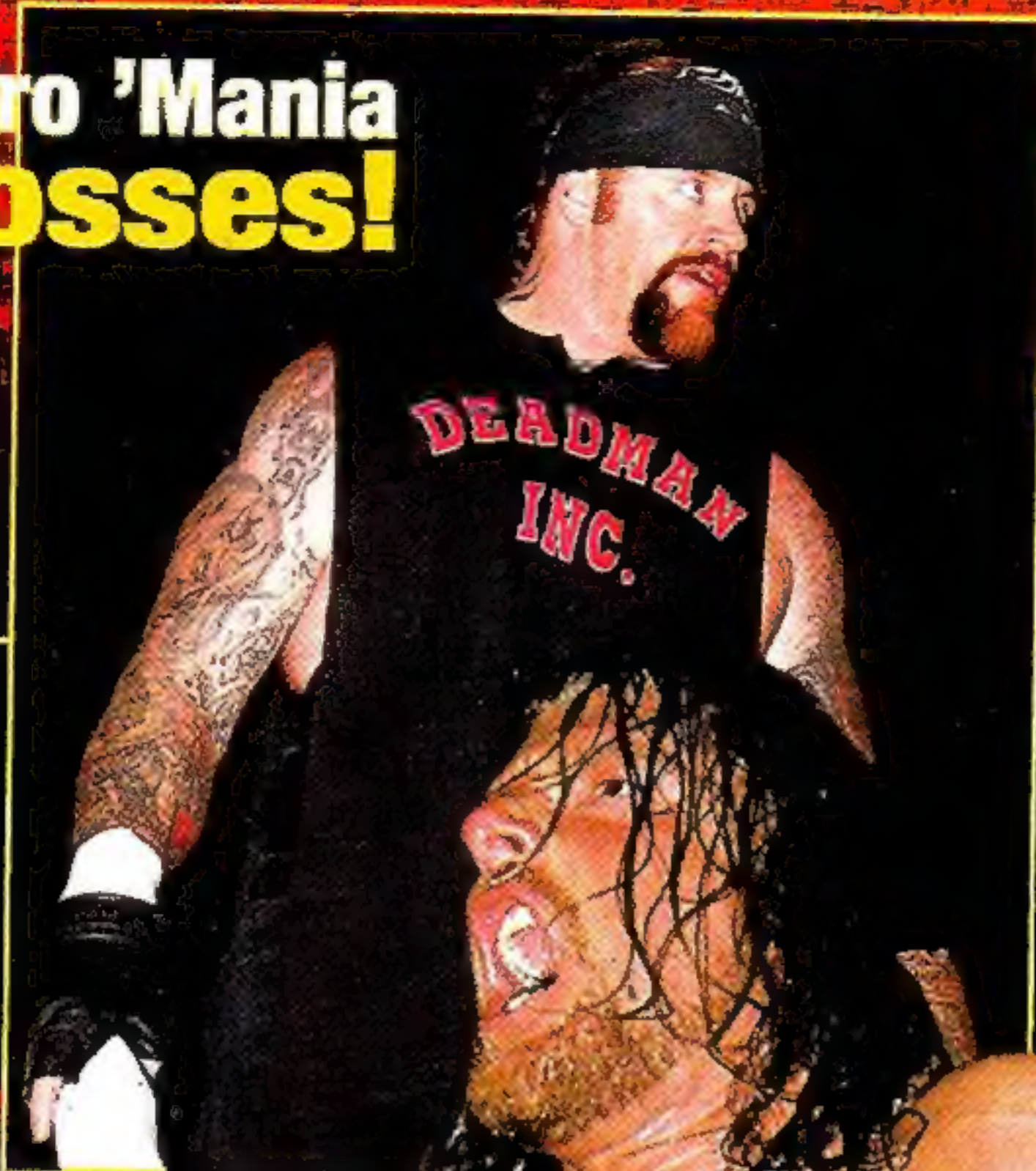
INSIDE Wrestling



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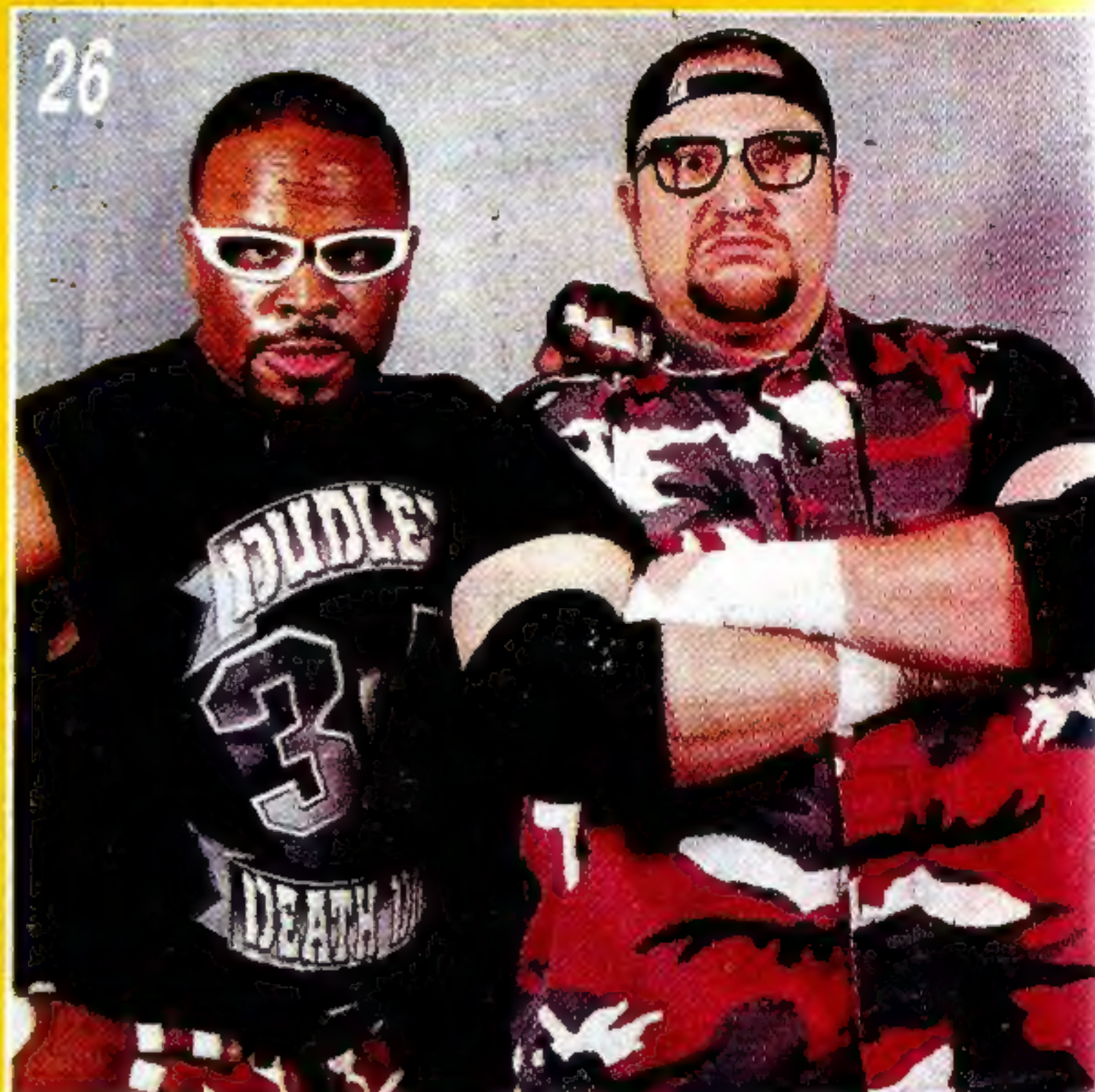
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SINCERELY yours

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CREDIT TO C.W.

Finally, someone gave C.W. Anderson the respect he's been lacking ever since he debuted in ECW ("You Can't Spell ECW Without C.W. How Could A Mid-Carder Be So Valuable?" March 2001).

Wrestling fans who actually appreciate well-wrestled matches know that C.W. Anderson is one of the best overall wrestlers in the sport today. Rarely does he give a bad effort, and rarely is he outwrestled by his opponent. He may have a head that's the size of New York City and an attitude to match, but the best wrestler in ECW today is "The Enforcer."

ALBERT MARONEY
Krum, TX

BELIEVE IT

I still find it hard to believe that Bret Hart, the best wrestler who ever lived, is now retired.

LEO RICKABAUGH
Putnam, Ontario

MVP: MISSING VALUABLE PLAYER

Although I can't stand Triple-H, I'm ready to admit that, yes, he is indeed the WWF's MVP.

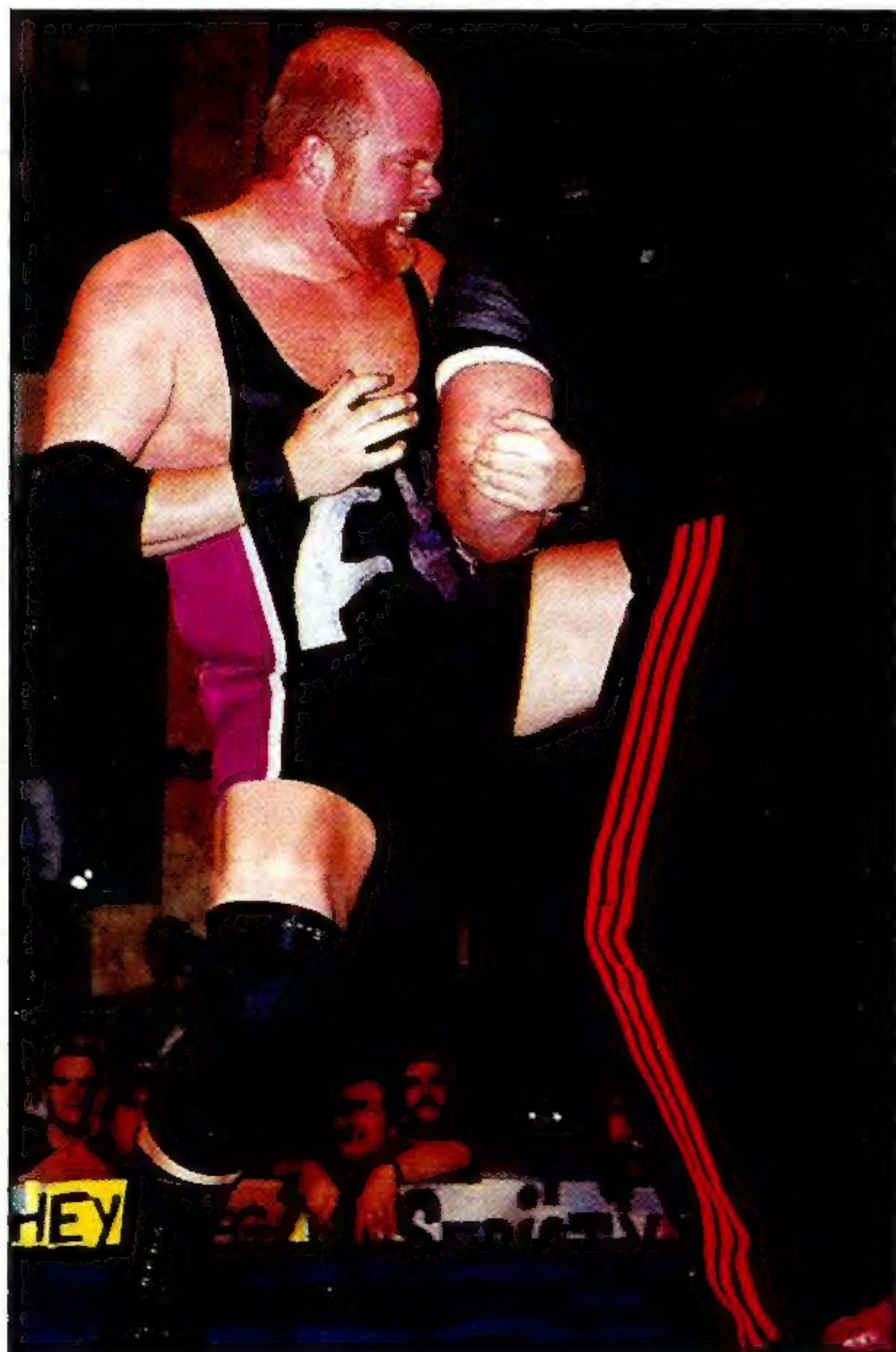
During the time that Triple-H had to take off to heal some injuries, the WWF seemed like it was missing a most vital ingredient, per-

haps a spark plug of sorts. Well, it was, and the spark plug that the WWF was missing was none other than Triple-H.

For most of 2000, Triple-H was the centerpiece of the federation, and without him, all the major players in the federation seemed lost. That didn't even happen when "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin first left following the 1999 Survivor Series.

How valuable is Triple-H to the WWF? Well, when you're the guy in the federation that everyone loves to hate most, believe it or not, you're going to be missed.

ELMER ABATE
Provo, UT



C.W. Anderson lays into Tommy Dreamer with a knee to the gut. "The Enforcer's" feud with Dreamer is his most noteworthy to date. Reader Albert Maroney was pleased to see some positive press on Anderson.



Where has Stacy Keibler, a.k.a. Miss Hancock, been? Reader Gregg Stemborski has been wondering. To tell you the truth, we have, too.

MISSING MISS HANCOCK

Where the hell is Stacy Keibler?
GREGG STEMBOORSKI
Glendale, CO

RVD'S FUTURE

Now that Rob Van Dam has been having problems with ECW, it will be interesting to see where "Mr. PPV" winds up. It will be even more interesting to see how well he fares.

First of all, I have a hard time picturing RVD wrestling in either



The Rock yells as he struggles to keep Kane pinned to the mat. Reader Robert Friel hopes Rock doesn't abandon the WWF for Hollywood anytime soon.

the WWF or WCW. He's not used to wrestling four-minute matches. Heck, I don't even know if the guy could get used to making his entrance in under four minutes. And I don't think that's because Rob's egotistical. Not at all. I just think it's because he likes giving his fans their money's worth, and Rob doesn't consider a four-minute match a solid effort.

If RVD does become successful, there is no doubt that he'll have to accept some new limitations. It'll be Rob's willingness (or lack thereof) to accept those limitations that will control his destiny wherever he winds up.

NICHOLAS WOLFE
Matteson, IL

KNOW YOUR ROLE, ROCK

I hope that you guys at INSIDE WRESTLING are right and The Rock never decides to completely abandon wrestling for Hollywood ("Who Knows The Rock's Role? Is He Ditching Wrestling For Hollywood?" March 2001).

I know that I'm looking forward to watching The Rock use his thespian abilities in the coming *The*

Mummy II and *The Scorpion King* films, but I'm not a Rock fan because of his work on *Saturday Night Live* or the talk show circuit. I'm a fan of The Rock because of what he does in the rings of the WWF. All these other media and acting appearances are just bonuses for his fans, and Rock gets them not because he's a great actor, but because he has millions and millions of WWF fans that come running at his every beckon call.

Rock, know your role and stay in the WWF!

ROBERT FRIEL
Brundidge, AL

PLEASE ... NO!

Given the fact that Mark Madden was just fired from WCW and Dennis Miller will probably be fired from *Monday Night Football*, here are two predictions for the coming year:

My prediction for what we'll all hear on the opening night of *Monday Night Football* for the 2001-02 season: "Spinnerooni! Spinnerooni! Keyshawn Johnson just did a post-

(Continued on page 72)

INSIDE Wrestling

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REPORTER'S notebook

By Stu Saks

Back in 1989, I received an angry phone call from then-WCW Executive Vice President Jim Herd. Jim was livid over the fact that we published a picture of Sid Vicious lying in a hospital bed with a punctured lung. At about that time, WCW was intent on finding its answer to WWF megastar Hulk Hogan, and Vicious was thought to be the best candidate. "He's our indestructible monster," Herd shouted. "He shouldn't be seen looking like that."

Herd was wrong, and I told him so. Allowing the public to see for themselves that wrestlers sustain serious injuries only helped the overall image that the business was trying to portray: that these men are athletes who put their very being on the line every time they step into the ring.

Let the fans see what this sport can do to a man, I argued.

* * *

I don't think I'll ever rid my mind of the image of what happened to Sid Vicious a dozen years later. All it took was a seemingly simple leap from the top turnbuckle during Sid's four-way against Scott Steiner, Jeff Jarrett, and Road Warrior Animal at the Sin pay-per-view on January 14. Upon landing, he broke his left tibia and fibula and, in a horrifying sight, part of his leg was left facing the opposite direction from his body. Vicious would have to undergo a two-hour surgical procedure during which a 43-centimeter rod was inserted into his leg.

The incident wasn't seen during the Sin broadcast, but a night later it was replayed again and again and again on *Nitro*. Tony Schiavone warned us, but that just fed our natural curiosity. In a sport with as much carnage as professional wrestling, we couldn't possibly be shocked.

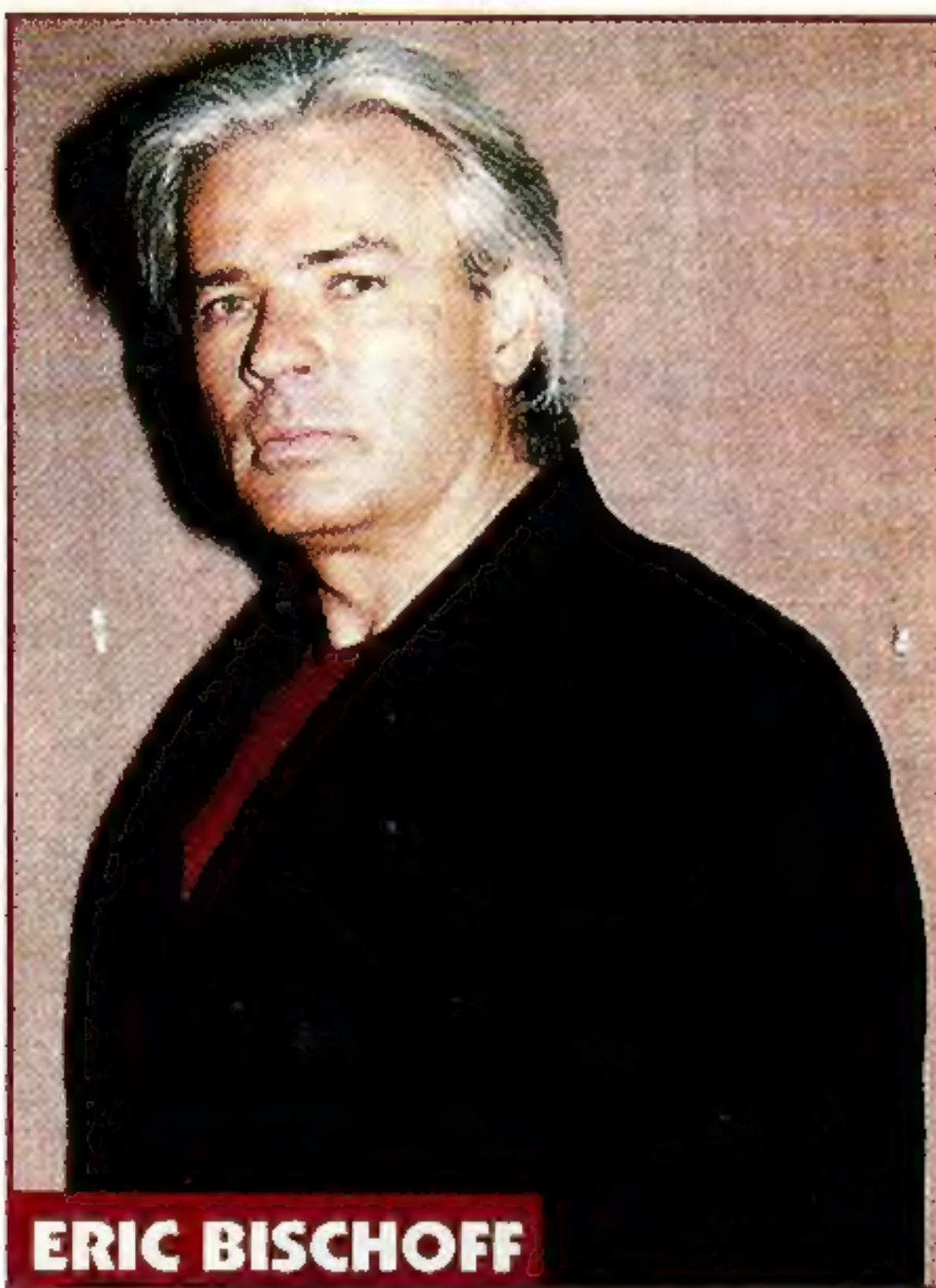
We weren't. We were sickened. Forget my argument with Jim Herd. This incident should never have been played on WCW TV. Of course, there would have been no way to edit the live PPV broadcast, so WCW should have counted themselves fortunate that they missed the shot. What purpose did it serve to run it for 2.5 million viewers the following night?

Former Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann claims he has never watched the replay of the hit he took from Lawrence Taylor that shattered his leg and ended his career. Sid will be sidelined for eight months. If he was watching *Nitro* from his hospital bed, the psychological impact could very well keep him out forever.

NAMES makin' news

By Frank Krewda

ERIC BISCHOFF, WITH help from his friends at Fusient Media Ventures, **Brian Bedol** and **Stephen Greenberg**, is once



ERIC BISCHOFF

again at the helm of World Championship Wrestling. It was announced in January that Fusient had purchased the federation from Time Warner and that Bischoff was named WCW's new president. TBS Inc. will retain a minority interest in WCW as well as long-term programming rights.

On the day the sale was announced, Bischoff appeared on WCW's Internet radio show, *WCW Live*, and spoke out on numerous subjects:

- The changes implemented by Fusient will take time to evolve. Bischoff stressed evolution over revolution.

- He hopes to work with **Hulk Hogan**, but said that Hogan was not expected to be a part of the new booking committee.

- WCW will employ an innovative approach in finding and developing new, exciting young talent.

- There is a chance that if **Scott Hall** cleans up his act, he could return to the federation.



SCOTT HALL

- The strong language used by WCW wrestlers on recent WCW broadcasts will be toned down significantly.

- He sees no need to feature himself as an on-air personality.

- The overwhelming success of the NWO might have helped to diminish the overall WCW brand name.

- In February '99, WCW had an opportunity to work with NBC, but the deal fell apart because of Turner/Time Warner red tape.

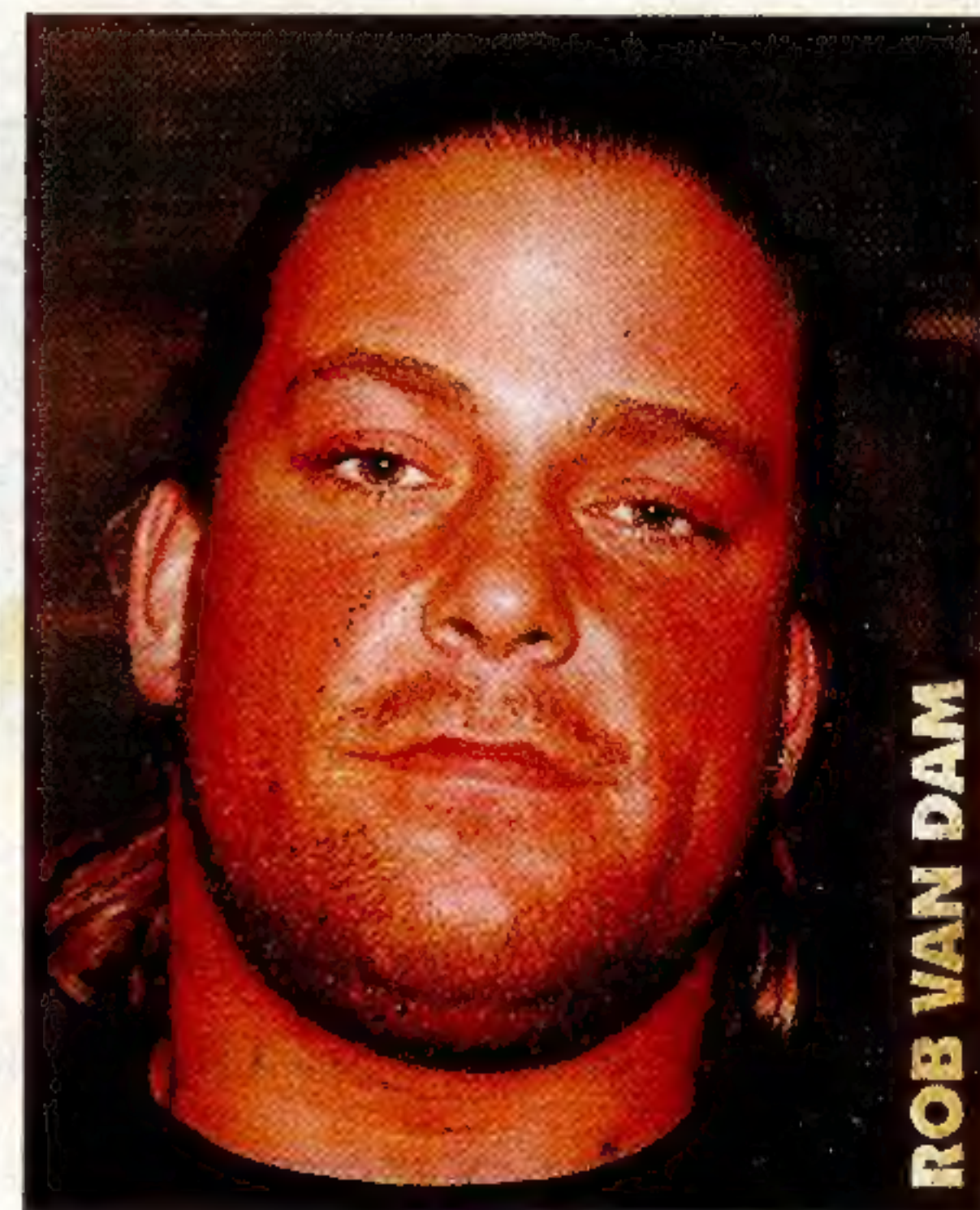
All in all, Bischoff come off much like he did in April of last year, when WCW was relaunched. Back then, Bischoff lauded his new partner, **Vince Russo**. Today, Bischoff won't even discuss Russo, presumably because he has a great personal distaste for the man. We can only hope Bischoff won't be refusing comment on Bedol and Greenberg a year from now.

ECW's *Guilty as Charged* pay-per-view on January 7 could have just as easily been dubbed *Filthy as Charged*, thanks to the vulgar contri-

butions of **Joel Gertner**, **Cyrus**, **Francine**, and **Rhino**. Even amid the raunch, **Paul Heyman** came up with one hell of a show—promising the fans one surprise, but actually delivering several.

First, there was the return of **Missy Hyatt**—whose foul mouth made even me blush. Then we witnessed the crowning of two new World champions: First, **The Sandman** defeated champ **Steve Corino** and **Justin Credible** in a three-way match to win the title. But only a few minutes into Sandman's first *World* title reign, TV champ **Rhino** emerged from the back and challenged The Sandman, who, you guessed it, stupidly accepted. A few kicks and one gore later, Rhino was ECW's first unified (World/TV) champion.

Judging by the crowd's chant of "R-V-D! R-V-D!" the night's biggest surprise was an obvious one, but it didn't make it any less important.



ROB VAN DAM

Rob Van Dam was back and ready to claim the ECW World title for himself. But when Van Dam stormed the ring, **Rhino** beat a hasty retreat. Then, in a flash, **Jerry Lynn** rushed in, and another Lynn-Van Dam clas-

sic was underway. This match didn't live up to their previous bouts, but it was an intense ending to the best show the company has put on in almost a year.

Other happenings at Guilty as Charged: Corino and Credible, frustrated at The Sandman's antics, decided to join forces after the show. The new name of the Francine-Credible-Corino-**Jack Victory** clique? Reportedly, it's **The Impact Players**.

But just as one team was forming, another broke up. **Swinger**, dissatisfied with the services of **Dawn Marie**, enlisted the talents of the **Blue Boy Management Company**, driving a wedge between himself and **Simon Diamond**. For a minute, it looked like Simon had another problem, but then Rhino showed up and Simon had a real honest-to-God catastrophe. Rhino gored everyone—including Dawn Marie and **Jasmin St. Claire**—into oblivion.

The latest word from the WWF is that **Marc** and **Rena Mero** (formerly known as **Sable**) have been in contact with the federation, inquiring about a possible return. While both



RENA MERO

sides feel some kind of agreement could be reached, WWF sources say bad blood between the former women's champ and the federation still exists. Then there's the matter of Rena's locker room presence. Former and current WWF stars openly complained about her prima donna attitude and smug personality. And even if Rena were to come back, she certainly wouldn't receive billing as the WWF's top beauty queen—not with the popularity **Chyna**, **Trish Stratus**, and **Lita** have enjoyed recently.

As far as I'm concerned, there's always room for another beautiful lady in wrestling, but I can't see Rena accepting a secondary or tertiary role.

I guess part of getting ahead in the WWF is knowing whose rear end to kiss. And since **Vince McMahon** probably has no more flesh to spare on his, **Raven** has started kissing up



RAVEN

to the next-best power broker in the company: **Triple-H**. Check out this quote Raven recently gave to *SLAM! Wrestling*: "I'm an enormous mark for Triple-H. I think he's the best worker

I've ever seen, period, bar none."

One WCW star who's had enough of bottom feeding is **Mike Awesome**. Awesome has recently gone to some



MIKE AWESOME

lengths to dump his goofy "That '70s Guy" gimmick and revert to the form that made him such a menacing opponent in ECW and Japan's FMW. Joining **Lance Storm's Team Canada** was a good start.

"There's nothing wrong with having a little fun," Awesome told me after a recent show, "but I started to get away from what I do best—and that's end careers. Joining Team Canada should help me get back on track."

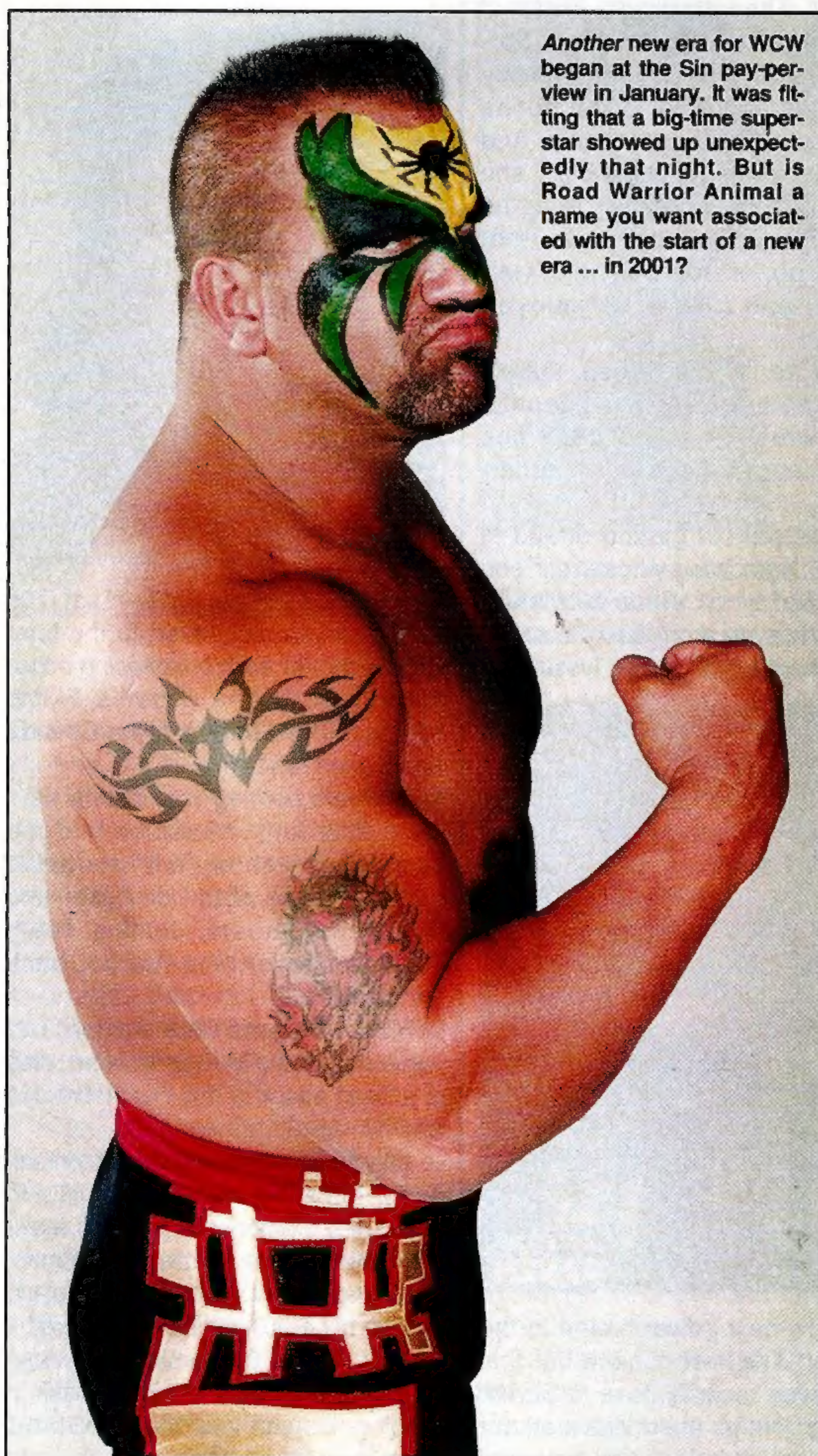
Mexican legend **Blue Demon**, real name **Alejandro Munoz Moreno**, died of a heart attack in mid-December. He was 78.

After **El Santo**, whom Demon defeated for the NWA welterweight title in 1953, Blue Demon was perhaps Mexico's most famous wrestler. Like Santo, Demon appeared in several movies and was as big a cultural icon as he was a wrestler. And, in the tradition of Mexican wrestlers who never lost their mask in the ring, Demon was buried with his mask on. □

ON THE road

With Dave Lenker

THIS MONTH, I'M in beautiful Indianapolis, Indiana, at the Canseco Fieldhouse, home of the Indiana Pacers. I am not here for a basketball game, though. Some of you might think that's unfortunate, but I



Another new era for WCW began at the Sin pay-per-view in January. It was fitting that a big-time superstar showed up unexpectedly that night. But is Road Warrior Animal a name you want associated with the start of a new era ... in 2001?

was actually looking forward to watching the WCW Sin pay-per-view (and I would never pay to see an NBA game). Please don't make any cheap jokes about the name Sin, like the one my colleague Dave Rosenbaum said about it being "a sin that WCW keeps charging good money each month for bad pay-per-views."

But sometimes it's hard not to be cynical. For example, when I got home and watched the videotape of the card, I heard Tony Schiavone introducing Sin as the first WCW pay-per-view of 2001, and declaring the beginning of a new era for WCW. Unfortunately, it seems like WCW has declared the beginning of a new era every month for the past year, ever since that New Blood vs. Millionaires Club

feud was introduced back in April 2000. It's hard not to notice that the WWF hasn't declared the beginning of a new era in a long time. That's because the WWF doesn't need new eras. The current era is just fine.

Veteran viewers of wrestling know that new eras—if they're to really happen—are ushered in not by old wrestlers, but by new, exciting wrestlers, and if that's the case, the first match on the Sin card was not a good sign for WCW. Shane Helms lost to WCW cruiserweight champion Chavo Guerrero Jr., which is no crime (Chavo being an excellent wrestler), but certainly doesn't encourage me to declare Helms as the Goldberg of the cruiserweight division. The bad news for Helms was that Chavo kicked out of his Nightmare on Helms' Street finisher. Wrestling history shows that once one wrestler solves another wrestler's finishing maneuver, every wrestler starts solving it (because they all know the secret). If I'm Shane Helms, I'd start looking for a new finisher.

Another bad sign for WCW: It's still holding matches in which the winner gets to be federation commissioner/president/CEO/king. The Cat pinned Mike Sanders in this one, and let me just say, once again, that it's bad enough when federations devalue their championship belts (as WCW and the WWF have done so many times), but it's even worse when the value of an important office such as federation president or commissioner is lessened. The job of commissioner should be given to the most qualified person for the position, not the person who wins a wrestling match.

Okay, now a word about Canadian rules. In the Lance Storm, Mike Awesome, and "Prime Time" Elix Skipper vs. Rey Misterio Jr., Konnan, and Billy Kidman match, we saw a three-on-one because two members of Storm's team were in the penalty box for a while. Is it really too much to ask that once in a while, a wrestling match is fought according to wrestling rules, and that ability and intelligence play a

(Continued on page 74)

BEHIND THE dressing room door

By Dave Rosenbaum

LOTS GOING ON in the squared circle these days. Here's a collection of random news:

The Rock makes *Electronic Media's* "Most Bankable" List. No, that doesn't mean the next time you walk into a bank, you'll be greeted by The Rock behind the teller's window, or that the next time you need a loan, you should call The Rock (although goodness knows he has enough money to shell out some cash to all of us). Basically, what it means is that *Electronic Media*, a weekly newspaper that covers the television industry, annually lists the most bankable stars in syndicated television, and that The Rock made the list at number nine.

It's a damn impressive list. Regis Philbin is number one. Oprah Winfrey is number two, so we're talking about some real heavyweights. Some guy named Kevin Sorbo is third (shows how much I know about television), followed by Judge Judy, Jerry Seinfeld, Pamela Anderson, Pat Sajak, Ray Romano, The Rock, and Bart Simpson.

Now, you might say, "The Rock beat out a cartoon character."

And I say, "Bart Simpson is far more real than Pamela Anderson."

Off the list from last year: Rosie O'Donnell and Jerry Springer.

This is nothing but further proof, as if we needed it, that the WWF is still awfully hot, and that The Rock is the biggest superstar in the sport.

Now the question: Is The Rock the biggest superstar in wrestling history?

Ooh! I can just hear all you Rock detractors out there saying, "Are you crazy, Rosenbaum? Bigger than Hulk Hogan? Bigger than Ric Flair? Bigger than Steve Austin?"

To which I answer with the following questions:

1. At what time in wrestling history has the sport been more popular?

2. How many millions more people are watching wrestling today than watched wrestling in the mid-1980s, when Hogan and Flair were at the peak of their popularity?

3. Did Steve Austin make the list of syndicated television's most bankable stars?

Bottom line: The Rock is the biggest superstar in wrestling history.

The Royal Rumble is the great-

est event in pro wrestling.

And here's why the Royal Rumble is the greatest event in pro wrestling: because the winner of the Royal Rumble is guaranteed a spot in the World title match in the main event of WrestleMania, no matter what happens between January and April (provided the Rumble winner doesn't do something stupid, like put his title shot up in a match). The same can't be said about the World champion, who can lose his title between January and April, and therefore lose his spot in the

(Continued on page 75)



Believe us when we tell you that it wasn't The Rock's wrestling abilities that put him in the top 10 of *Electronic Media's* "Most Bankable" list. Dave Rosenbaum believes Rock's charisma and charm helped him become wrestling biggest superstar ever.

THE insider

by Brandi Mankiewicz

(The opinions expressed in "The Insider" are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)

"It was a dark and stormy night ..."
—Snoopy

"The sky is falling! The sky is falling!"
—Chicken Little

IT IS SAID that for every beginning, there is an end. For every death, there is a birth. In other words, what goes up must come down. The concept is so simple that it frightens me when the average wrestling fan can't grasp it. Now, I know those are mighty big words and you might not fully understand what I am writing this month. Since I am your champion, I will write this column at both an intellectual level and, well, your level. It's a form of closed captioning, but for the mentally impaired.

For those of you who still have no clue, "Wrestling is in the downward pull of a recession" means **WE'S A-GOIN' DOWNHILL FAST** in your rudimentary grasp of the English language. The wrestling boom period is ending. It's over, folks. Now, before you shake your flea-bitten, never-washed head and say **NUH-UH**, here are some facts to support my theory:

•**Show attendance is down.** To you, this means **WE AIN'T GOIN' TA ALL DA SHOWS NO MORE**. The WWF doesn't sell out every town anymore. WCW struggles to sell the seats on the arena floor. The only sell-outs that occur in ECW happen when one of the

wrestlers signs a contract with another viable company. Sure, this downward trend could be attributed to casual fans moving on to another hot "in" thing to do. Wrestling isn't new and fun to these people, so they leave for whatever is floating their boat at this particular moment. Don't worry, it's not a loss, since they

never really cared anyway. Another factor is that some parents refuse to expose their children to the lewd antics of wrestlers and fans alike. Ever see the look a mother gives her 10-year-old child as the nasty "S" chant resounds through the arena when Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley is in the ring? That's one more family that won't be returning ... unless Mom stays home.

•**Ratings have declined.** WCW has struggled throughout the last year, spiraling downward into near ratings oblivion. Vince Russo's "crash TV" concept left even the most loyal viewers (i.e. **YOUS GUYS**) wondering what the hell was going on. It's been ugly, but not as ugly as it has been for ECW. ECW doesn't even have ratings or a cable-TV show to speak of—and it might be dead by the time you read this. Even the almighty WWF's ratings are down this year. That drop isn't quite as easy to explain. Even though the WWF moved over to TNN, the ratings have dropped. This surprises me since most of you idiots are already very familiar with the channel. **DAT'S DA ONE WIT DA MONSTER TRUCK RALLIES THAT MOM LOVES TO WATCH**. Of course, the other logical explanation for the ratings drop is that you can no longer afford cable.

•**Merchandise sales are slowing.** Now, why don't you really want the new Steve Austin T-shirt? It matches the others in the pile in the



Stephanie's upset again ... because that naughty chant is starting again. You know, you people could be damaging the health of this wonderful sport by insulting Daddy's little girl in this profane manner.

(Continued on page 76)

ON assignment

By Liz Hunter

THE DRAMA UNFOLDING around The Rock and Steve Austin is fascinating, and I hope fans are savoring the moment. Watch closely, because you won't see anything like this again.

Kurt Angle was the WWF World champion at the time I wrote this piece. Rock and Austin were circling Angle like vultures ready to capture their prey. The Rock says, "Austin, if you're able to beat Kurt Angle for the WWF title, congratulations. But then you'll have to deal with The Rock!"

Steve Austin says, and I'm paraphrasing, "Rock, if you manage to

become WWF champion before I do, I'm glad for ya. But you can bet your bottom damn dollar that I'm gonna be waitin' for ya, son!"

Rock and Austin are trying to keep a highbrow tone to their simmering rivalry. Since Austin's return, both men have stood poised against each other, ready to strike. But both men are afraid to make the first big move because they know that if this feud erupts, the WWF will never be the same.

It reminds me of The Cold War. Rock and Austin are ready for battle, capable of blowing up the WWF a

100 times over. There's a lot of snarling and posturing, but no real action. As the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. used the occasional third world country as a pawn in their global struggle, Rock and Austin were using Angle as a pawn. They almost dared each other to beat Angle.

The WWF's version of the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred when Austin used a stunner on The Rock during an edition of *Smackdown* back in the fall. That didn't ignite the war, because the big prize wasn't on the line, namely the WWF World title. It was a close call, however, and Rock answered by using a Rock bottom on Austin later that same night.

The dual popularity of Rock and Austin is unparalleled in wrestling history. Never has a company had two such popular stars of equal magnitude. It usually takes all of a federation's resources and creative energy to make a superhero out of just one wrestler. The closest the WWF ever came was The Megapowers, Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage. But even in that comparison, Savage was clearly in Hogan's shadow.

Another example might come from the late-1970s, when Bob Backlund was WWF World champion. He was the flagship of the company while Bruno Sammartino played elder statesman, settling old feuds and fighting the moral fights. While Backlund and Bruno may have been equal in popularity, no one ever expected them to fight for control of the WWF's destiny. Bruno's championship days were clearly behind him.

There have also been cases of two wrestlers establishing a stale-

(Continued on page 77)



The Rock has taken dozens of stunners, but one he took from Steve Austin this fall looked like it'd reignite the war between these two. It didn't. Liz Hunter says it'll likely take a heel turn by one to get this feud to explode again.

CAPSULE profile

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KEVIN NASH

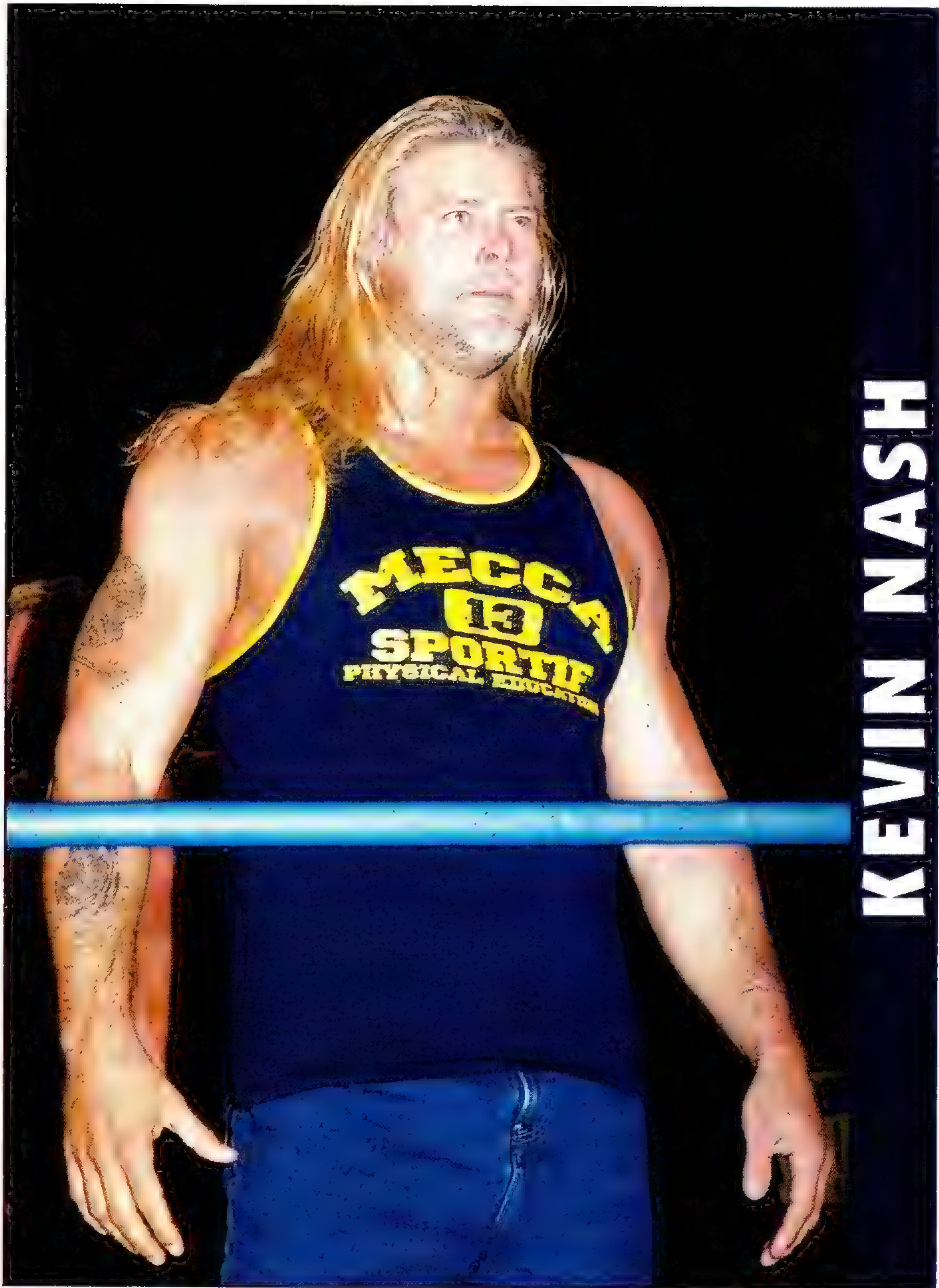
THOUGH HE PROBABLY won't be remembered as a tag team specialist, believe it or not, Kevin Nash is now an eight-time world tag team champion, with his last two championships coming as a partner of "Diamond" Dallas Page in WCW ... Born on July 9, 1958, and grew up in suburban Detroit ... Stood 6'10" by the time he was 14 ... Played Division I college basketball with the University of Tennessee ... A knee injury cut his professional career short ... As Steele, made his debut in the NWA in late-1990 (*"Even then I wasn't as green as The Natural Born Thrillers"*) ... Changed his name to Oz in 1991 ... Unfortunately, Oz

wasn't so great and powerful ... Changed his name for a second time, this time to Vinnie Vegas (*"That was the first time I hooked up with Page"*) ... Debuted in the WWF as Shawn Michaels' bodyguard, Diesel, in 1993 ... Beat Razor Ramon (Scott Hall) for the WWF Intercontinental title on April 13, 1994 ... With Michaels, defeated The Headshrinkers for the World tag team title on August 28 of that year ... Captured his first world title by making short work of WWF champion Bob Backlund on November 26 ... By then, he and Michaels had split ... In a period of eight months, Diesel had captured the WWF Intercontinental, World

tag team, and World titles (*"Boy, was that one hell of a run"*) ... His World title reign lasted nearly one year before he lost the belt to Bret Hart at the 1995 Survivor Series ... Returned to WCW in 1996 and helped create the New World Order with Hulk Hogan and Hall ... Helped Hogan beat The Giant for the WCW World title ... By the end of '96, the NWO had firmly established itself as the most powerful clique in wrestling history (*"The NWO will always be a part of me"*) ... A power struggle between Nash and Hogan led to a split within the NWO ... Nash broke away to form the NWO Wolfpac, a group that surprisingly had most of the fans on its side ... Won the WCW World title at Starrcade '98 by handing champ Bill Goldberg his first loss—with the help of a Scott Hall taser attack ... A few nights later, he laid down for Hulk Hogan to reunite the NWO (*"It was a necessary evil"*) ... The reunion didn't last long ... Lost to Hogan in a retirement match at Road Wild on August 14, 1999 (*"Retirement matches are such a joke"*) ... Formed yet another NWO alliance, this one with Bret Hart, Jeff Jarrett, and Scott Steiner ... It was doomed from the start ... Defeated WCW Commissioner Terry Funk on January 17, 2000, for the commissionership ... Even with his commissioner's powers, was unable to keep Sid Vicious from repeatedly winning the World title ... Won the title himself on May 23 by beating Jeff Jarrett, then again on August 28 by defeating Booker T ... At press time, he was dominating the World tag team title scene with his partner, DDP (*"There's no team in WCW as powerful as The Insiders are right now"*). □



Kevin Nash ruins Shawn Stasiak's day by destroying him with a jackknife power bomb. Along with "Diamond" Dallas Page, "Big Sexy" is currently one-half of the WCW World tag team champions.



WHATEVER happened to

By Scott Teal

... NORMAN FREDERICK CHARLES III

Many wrestlers cite all the traveling and bouncing from town to town that they do as the toughest part of their job. By the time he joined the pro circuit, Norman Frederick Charles III was used to moving around a lot.

He was born in 1941 and lived in Manchester, England, until he was three years old. At that time, his father moved the family to Australia. As Norman reached his teen years, he returned to England to attend a private school.

Norman began amateur wrestling at age 14 as a lightweight, then eventually moved up to middleweight. He also attended pro matches regularly to see Jackie Pallo, Mick McManus, Bert Assirati, and others. It wasn't long before he was visiting a gym run by the father of future great Billy Rob-

inson and working out with Billy.

After finishing high school, he returned to Australia and visited a gym run by old-time wrestler Al Morgan. Morgan and Jim Deacon put Norman through a 16-month training regimen before allowing him to turn pro. Another student at the gym at the time was John Boyd, who would one day find success as Lord Jonathan Boyd.

With his blond hair and dark tan, Norman made his debut as Murphy the Surfie in 1966. Promoter Jim Barnett later changed Norman's name to Murphy the Magnificent and put him with Boyd, who was wrestling as "Pretty Boy" Johnny Boyd. During the two years they worked for Barnett, they made several trips to New Zealand, Samoa, and the Fiji Islands.

The next move for Norman was back to England, where he wrestled as the outrageous Maurice LaRue. Norman was eventually brought to the U.S. by Sam Menacker, who got Norman to use his given name in the ring. Soon Norman received a call from Boyd, who at this point was wrestling as Lord Jonathan Boyd in Oregon. Boyd wanted him to be his partner.

Fortunately for Norman, he had already been letting his blond hair revert to its natural color and was growing a beard. By the time he arrived in the Northwest, he and Boyd looked a lot alike. Boyd talked with one of their old friends from Australia, Roy



Heffernan, who along with Al Costello was one of the original Fabulous Kangaroos. He got Roy's blessing to use the Kangaroo name ... and The Royal Kangaroos were born.

During the next eight years, The Royal Kangaroos headlined wrestling shows in Oregon, the Carolinas, and Georgia. While working in Calgary for Stu Hart in late-1978, they had creative differences and went their separate ways. Norman toured Germany, returned to wrestle in the U.S., and in 1982, he finished up in the Gulf Coast territory.

After leaving wrestling, Norman began working as a merchant seaman in Louisiana. That job kept him away from home for the better part of two years, so when he had enough of it, he applied for a position as operator of a water treatment plant in Milton, Florida. He has been there for the past 11 years. He also works part-time as a technician in forensic anthropology.

In his spare time, Norman enjoys golf and saltwater fishing. He and his wife, Ann, have been married for 30 years and have two children.

(Scott Teal publishes the newsletter "Whatever Happened To ...?" He can be reached at: P.O. Box 2781, Hendersonville, TN 37077-2781. Web site: www.1wrestlinglegends.com) □



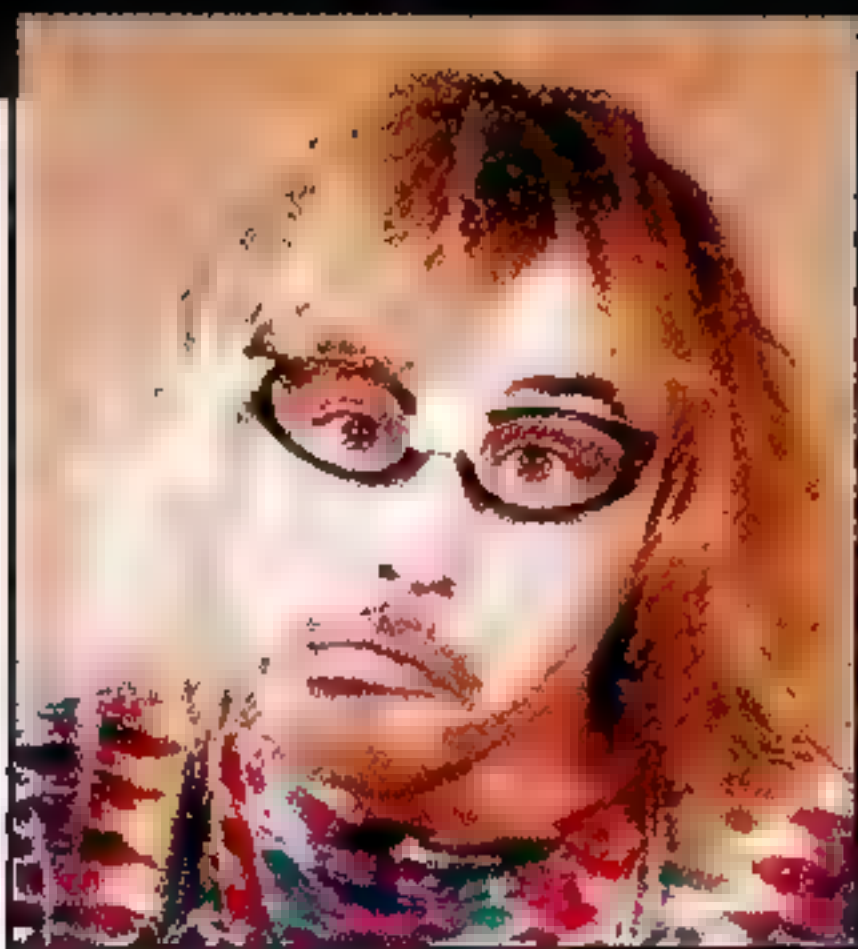
Wrestling as one-half of The Royal Kangaroos, Norman Frederick Charles III applies a side headlock on Thunderbolt Patterson during a 1973 match.

NEWS FROM THE wrestling caps

NEW YORK, NY
BY RON ELLIOTT



**RHINO
VS.
SPIKE DUDLEY**



Poor Spike Dudley was Rhino's victim at Massacre on 34th Street. Spike didn't get a chance to show off many of his "Giant Killer" moves because Rhino dominated. Rhino dropped Spike over the steel railing and across a ringside table, opening a gash on Spike's forehead. Once Rhino tasted Spike's blood, he snared him in a chinlock, using tape to choke out Spike. To make matters even worse, after the match ended, Spike got hit with three chair shots to the back of his head.

OTHER BOUTS: Christian York & Joey Matthews beat Simon Diamond & Swinger ... E.Z. Money beat Mahoney ... Nova defeated Julio Dinero ... Danny Doring & Roadkill beat ECW World tag team champs Little Guido Maritato & Tony Mamaluke to win the title ... C.W. Anderson pinned Tommy Dreamer ... Mikey Whipwreck & Yoshihiro Tajiri beat Kid Kash & Super Crazy ... ECW World champ Steve Corino won a three-way match against Jerry Lynn and Justin Credible.

NEWARK, DE
BY JEFF AMDUR



**CHRIS DANIELS
VS.
RECKLESS YOUTH**



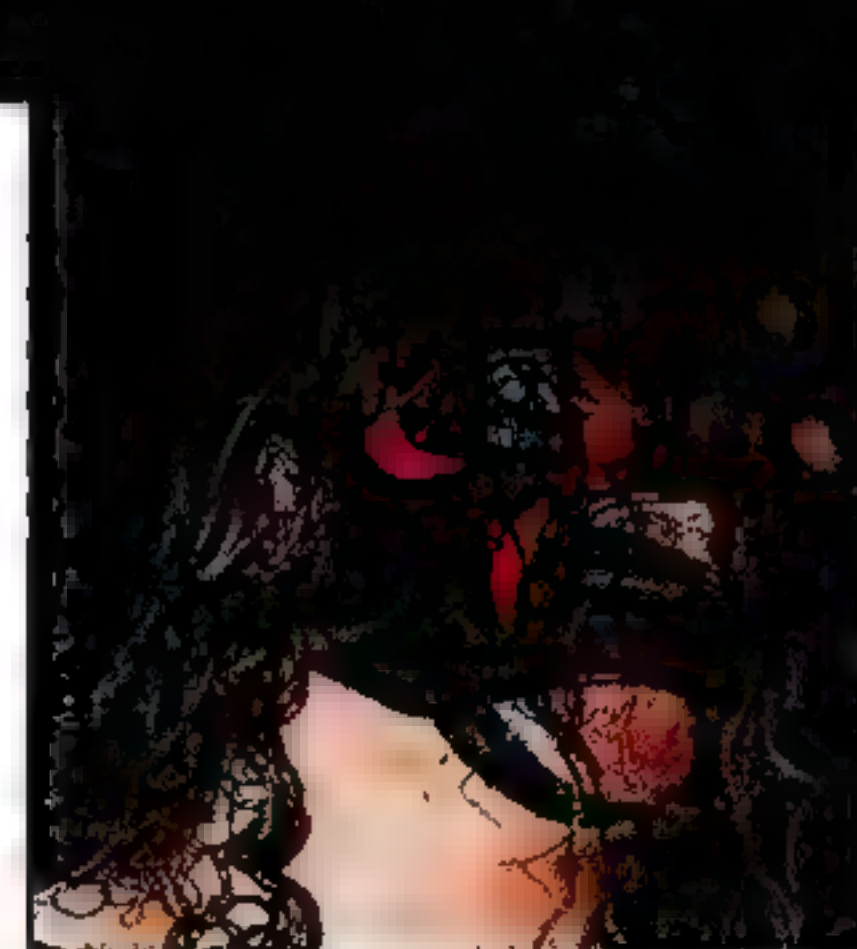
In a battle for independent supremacy, Daniels pinned Reckless Youth in front of 1,471 fans at the Bob Carpenter Center. The two matched each other hold for hold for much of the bout, with neither gaining a clear advantage. In the end, the two exchanged rollups and cradles, but it was Daniels who was able to get Reckless' shoulders down for the pin.

OTHER BOUTS: Low-Ki pinned Scoot Andrews ... Johnny Maxx, Vince Goodnite, & Thunder beat Mozart Fontaine, Persian Prince, & Mr. Ooh La La ... Memphis Championship Wrestling Southern champ Steve Bradley won a three-way bout against Inferno and Simon Diamond ... ECWA Mid-Atlantic champ Glen Osbourne beat Patch in a chain match ... Boogie Woogie Brown pinned Viper ... Ty Street pinned Kevin Kelly in a blindfold match ... Carnage won a battle royal ... ECWA tag champs Russ & Charlie Haas beat Jay & Mark Briscoe ... Cheetah Master beat ECWA champ J.J. The Ring Crew Guy for the title.

BIRMINGHAM, AL
BY JERRY JENKINS



**CHRIS JERICO
VS.
KANE**



Chris Jericho showed a lot of courage at Armageddon by defeating Kane in a last-man-standing bout. The two began brawling before the bell even rang. Kane got the better of Jericho several times during the bout, but Y2J would not go down. In the end, Jericho knocked over a wall of barrels onto Kane and stood on top of the wreckage to prevent Kane from rising before the count of 10.

OTHER BOUTS: The Radicals beat The Hardy Boyz & Lita ... William Regal pinned Hardcore Holly ... Val Venis beat Chyna ... Edge & Christian won a four-way tag team match against WWF World tag champs Bull Buchanan & The Goodfather, The Dudley Boyz, and Road Dogg & K-Kwik for the belts ... Chris Benoit beat WWF I-C champ Billy Gunn for the title ... WWF women's champ Ivory won a three-way against Trish Stratus and Molly Holly ... WWF champ Kurt Angle won a "Hell In A Cell" match against The Rock, Steve Austin, Rikishi, Triple-H, and The Undertaker.

**QUEENS, NY
BY PAUL VARGAS**



**STEVE CORINO
VS.
THE SANDMAN**



The common perception that Sandman would be the first to get to his feet in a "Last Call" match was true, but thanks to Jack Victory, ECW World champ Steve Corino still won. Corino and Sandman spent most of the match trading wicked blows. Sandman carried a section of the ringside barrier into the ring and suplexed Corino onto it. With both men down, referee Jim Molineaux started a 10-count. Sandman was up first and apparently won, but Corino had the ref occupied. Victory then knocked Sandman to the mat as Corino got to his feet and was declared the victor.

OTHER BOUTS: Chilly Willy beat Mike Bell ... Jerry Lynn beat Christian York ... ECW World tag champs Danny Doring & Roadkill beat The Baldies ... ECW TV champ Rhino beat Spike Dudley ... Little Guido Maritato & Tony Mamaluke beat Mikey Whipwreck & Yoshihiro Tajiri ... Tommy Dreamer & The Dudley Boyz defeated C.W. Anderson, Simon Diamond, & Swinger.

**ANAHEIM, CA
BY MARY WHITE**



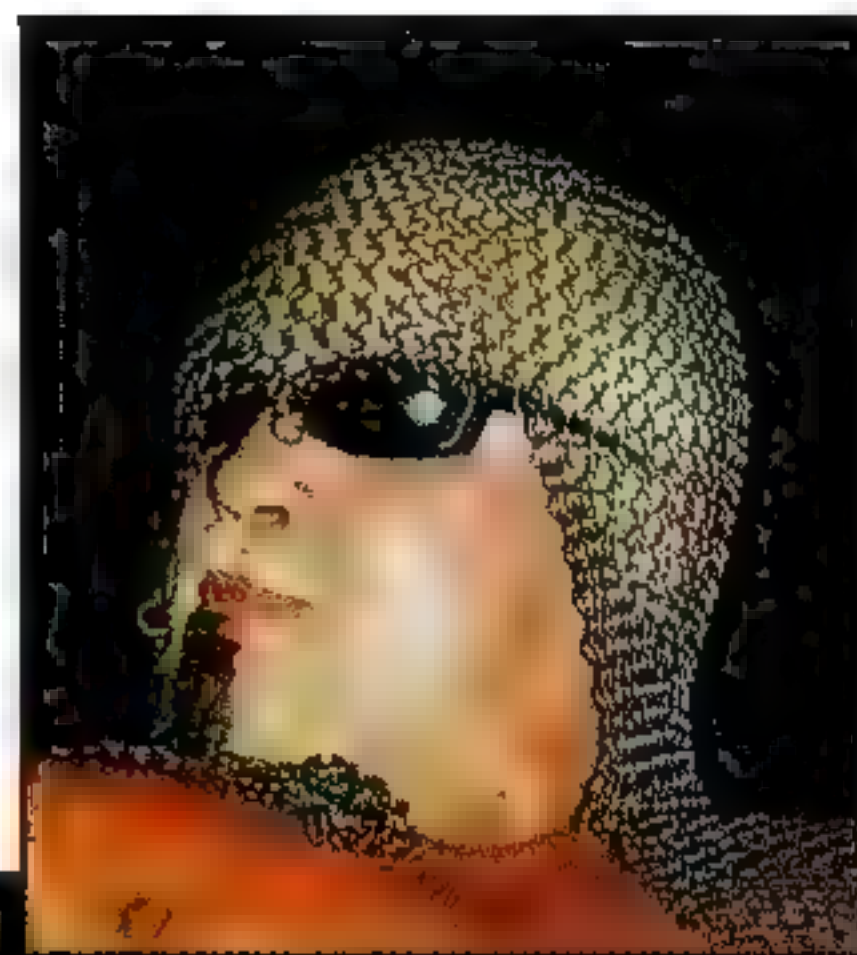
**KURT ANGLE
VS.
STEVE AUSTIN**



WWF World champ Kurt Angle may have won this match, but it was Steve Austin who celebrated afterward. At the outset, Angle enraged the fans by calling them idiots. Austin made him pay for this by dominating the match. Austin hit his "Stone-Cold" stunner and covered the champ for a pin, but Edge and Christian interfered. Angle then hit Austin with the belt and got the pin. Austin recovered quickly, though, and ran off all three before downing a few beers.

OTHER BOUTS: The Acolytes beat Bull Buchanan & The Goodfather ... WWF women's champ Ivory pinned Molly Holly ... Chris Jericho defeated Perry Saturn ... Albert pinned Test ... Billy Gunn pinned Val Venis ... WWF hardcore champ Raven pinned Steve Blackman ... Edge & Christian won a triple threat elimination match against The Hardy Boyz and The Dudley Boyz ... Hardcore Holly beat Big Bossman ... The Rock & The Undertaker beat Kane & Rikishi in a no-disqualification match.

**WASHINGTON, DC
BY STEVE DREW**



**SCOTT STEINER
VS.
SID VICIOUS**



WCW champ Scott Steiner dominated this Starrcade main event with his fists, his feet, and a lead pipe. Sid rallied and even had Steiner set up for a choke-slam, but that's when Steiner hit the ref. A second ref ran in and tried to count a pin on Steiner, but Jeff Jarrett interfered. This gave Steiner time to hit Sid with a low blow, a T-bone suplex, and lock on the Steiner recliner for the win.

OTHER BOUTS: Three Count beat Jamie Noble, Kaz Hayashi, & Yang in a ladder match ... Lance Storm beat The Cat ... Terry Funk pinned WCW hardcore champ Crowbar to win the title ... Kronik wrestled Big Vito & Reno to a no-contest ... Mike Awesome beat Bam Bam Bigelow ... WCW U.S. champ Gen. Rection beat Shane Douglas by DQ ... Jeff Jarrett & Don & Ron Harris beat Billy Kidman, Rey Mysterio Jr., & Konnan ... Kevin Nash & Dallas Page beat WCW World tag champs Chuck Palumbo & Shawn Stasiak for the title ... Bill Goldberg pinned Lex Luger.

PLAIN speaking

With Matt Brock

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor

This is the town where Buddy Rogers and Pat O'Connor once wrestled for the world championship in front of 38,622 at

Comiskey Park, the old baseball stadium. That crowd was a record for wrestling at the time—June 30, 1961—and scribes

were billing it as the greatest wrestling match ever. Turned out to be pretty unforgettable. Rogers beat O'Connor for the title, and anyone who was there that night will never forget it. These days, the WWF comes to Chicago, and half the time is spent with two women, Stephanie McMahon and Trish Stratus, whining about who's getting favored status in the WWF. ¶ Don't know about you, but when I watch wrestling, I do it to get away from the real world, but when Stephanie McMahon is complaining about how Trish Stratus is getting earrings, a fur coat, and a new limo, that's too close to real life for me. Then we hear about a spanking match (no such thing as that in O'Connor and Rogers' day, as far as I can remember), and get some soap opera about Vince McMahon fooling around with Trish Stratus, and Stephanie being angry at her father about it. ¶ Used to be that this was one of the toughest towns on earth, a town where the feds went up against Al Capone, fans burned disco records on a baseball field, and the mayor had the power to control presidential elections. Sinatra said that if you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere, but there's no town tougher than Chicago. The WWF might want to think about that next time, and schedule some matches befitting of Chicago's image.

CHICAGO, ILL.



TRISH STRATUS

Sid Vicious is one of the few men in wrestling history to hold both the WWF and WCW world heavyweight titles, but when the final wrapup is written on his career, there'll be a lot about how often he got injured, and how much he might have accomplished if he hadn't been so injury-prone. Strange thing about Vicious is that he's not a high-risk wrestler, but he's had shoulder problems and leg problems, and at the Sin pay-per-view here, he snapped his leg in two and broke his back. News is that he'll be out nearly eight months, which means that when you read this, he won't even be ready for rehab. ¶ Ran into Dave Lenker here tonight and we agreed that while it's fashionable to mention Vicious and The Ultimate Warrior in the same breath, the fact is that Vicious accomplished a lot more while getting a lot less attention. Lenker also made the comment that Vicious, for all his size and strength, "really isn't much of an athlete," which is an interesting thing to say about a guy who's won two different world titles, but might actually be true. Wrestling has always been full of big men who would've been bar bouncers if they hadn't run into a stroke of luck, like meeting the right people at the right time. Luck hasn't exactly been Vicious' trademark, but you have to figure that for all his problems, his career has gone a lot better than most.

Over the past 30 or 40 years, I've kept a pretty good record of the towns I've passed through, and according to my records, I'd never before been to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Unfortunately, there was good reason to be here tonight, because the word on the grapevine is that this might have been ECW's last arena card ever. ¶ Damn shame if that's the truth, for

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

PINE BLUFF, AR

a lot of reasons. About a year and a half ago, ECW appeared to be ready to challenge WCW for the number-two spot in the U.S. wrestling market. It had promising talent, plenty of action, loyal fans, and this magazine had granted it world title status. Then things started going wrong, the top talent started defecting to the WWF and WCW, and TNN chose the WWF over ECW. The other reason it would be a damn shame if this was ECW's last card ever is that ECW's last card should have been held at the ECW Arena in Philadelphia. For a while, that was the only place to see ECW, and the fans there are as loyal and crazed as any I've ever seen in all my years of covering the sport. ¶ Justin Credible beat Sandman in what was supposed to be the last match, but then they had another match, and Sandman beat Credible. After it was over, all of the wrestlers in the locker room came to the ring with trash cans filled with beer and drank a toast to what was a pretty good run, if it's over. Federations have come and gone, and we've seen a lot of them die over the past 15 years, but this one was unexpected, at least to me.

Back home thinking about what's happened with this sport. Used to be that Chicago, St. Louis, and New York City were the wrestling capitals of North America. Now the wrestling capitals of the world are TNN, MTV, UPN, and Turner's networks. Doesn't much matter where a card



THE SANDMAN

is held anymore, because all the arenas are nothing but glorified, oversized TV studios, and the fans are as much of a prop as the Jumbotron and the women walking around wearing almost nothing. ¶ The only reason people attend live cards anymore is to maybe be seen on camera, which means that going to a wrestling match is no different than going to watch any old TV show taping. If that's the way it has to be, then that's the way it has to be, but it seems to this reporter as if there's no turning back. ¶ Back in the '70s, when the WWF taped its weekly shows in Pennsylvania, watching on TV, you could hardly tell there was a crowd. These days, everything's part of production values. Don't know about you, but I don't like being a part of production values. □

NEW YORK, NY

THE DUDLEY'S

HOME COMING

**"YOU SOLD OUT"
NEVER SOUNDED
SO GOOD!**



Photos by George Tahinos and Frank Vitucci





By Harry Burkett

THE DUDLEY BOYZ basked in their villainy as they left ECW some 18 months ago, prompting chants of "You sold out!" to reverberate throughout arenas during their final weeks with the company. Buh Buh Ray and D-Von further alienated hardcore loyalists by vowing to lay their ECW World tag team title belts "at the feet of the McMahons" when they arrived in Stamford. They were prevented from doing so when Tommy Dreamer and Raven defeated them for the title during their last night with ECW.

Broadcaster Joey Styles will never forget that fateful night at the Elks Lodge in Queens. "Outside, it was as hot as hell, but it was even hotter in that arena," he recalled. "The heat was incredible—temperature-wise and crowd-wise. When Buh Buh Ray and D-Von started ripping ECW and our fans and actually showing their pride in selling out and going to the WWF, well, I thought we'd have a riot on our hands."


The Dudleys have a bizarre concept of pride. They pride themselves on wreaking havoc and rocking the status quo. But the Dudleys have mellowed just a bit since joining the WWF, and, as millions of fans cheer wherever they go, Buh Buh Ray and D-Von are genuinely enjoying their newfound acceptance. They have become very appreciative of their success—and are even more appreciative of their roots in ECW. After all, the bingo hall in Philly and the Elks Lodge in Queens helped the Dudleys get invited to the big dance.

Buh Buh Ray and D-Von expressed their appreciation by getting permission from the WWF to make a one-night appearance in ECW. It wasn't to gloat about their WWF success at a time when ECW was going through some very rough times. Instead, it was to pay back ECW and its fans. The Dudleys refused compensation for the engagement.



More than 18 months ago, *The Dudley Boyz* were accused of selling out when they jumped to the WWF. During a December ECW show in Queens, the Dudleys proved those critics wrong ... by selling out the building!

You didn't think the Dudleys could return to ECW for a night and not put someone through a table, did you? Dawn Marie was foolish to anger them in Queens. She wasn't in the Christmas spirit after they got through with her.



Intimidating Buh Buh Ray Dudley? Did C.W. Anderson really think this little tactic would work? The Dudleys are not intimidated by anyone. And they weren't going to be humiliated on this night.



The Dudleys (executing a 3D on Mahoney during a 1999 match) never seemed like the magnanimous type. What they did for ECW in December, however, won't soon be forgotten by anyone in the company.

this company, and they get a hero's welcome! I'm bustin' my ass here every night, and for what? What appreciation do I get? Nothin'! Why not put the Dudleys against Dreamer and Kid Kash? Or Steve Corino and Jack Victory?"

Perhaps Diamond should be granted some leeway since he's a notorious sore loser. Besides Diamond, Swinger, and C.W. Anderson—Diamond's tag team partners for the evening—it was hard to find anyone with a vendetta against the Dudleys. They had been evil enough in their ECW heyday to maintain the respect of fellow heels, and they had reformed enough to earn the trust of former rivals. By most accounts, it was a successful homecoming.

"The Dudleys proved we may leave ECW someday, but ECW will never leave us," said Dreamer. "Sweating blood and beer all those nights, and trying to give the people their money's worth—it builds your character. It gives you a work ethic and a real appreciation when you finally become successful. That's why so many former ECW wrestlers, especially the Dudleys, have kicked ass after leaving here."

But not everyone wanted to thank the Dudleys that night.

"Who the hell do they think they are?!" asked Diamond after the match. "Those idiots walked out on

Will the Dudleys ever return to ECW on a full-time basis? Whether they do or not, Buh Buh Ray and D-Von demonstrated their loyalty to the company that made them stars—and the fans who made it possible. □

SCOTT



Photos by Vern Verna

STEINER

Are His Shoulders Large Enough To Carry WCW?



Is Scott Steiner WCW's greatest World champion ever? Not yet, but he might be well on his way. Of course, he's gonna have to start beating stronger opponents than Big Vito if he hopes to go down in history.

He's outrageous. He's accomplished. And he's the most captivating wrestler on WCW's roster. But does Scott Steiner have enough between the ears to carry his company back to the top?

By Frank Krewda

SCOTT STEINER WAS among the most feared wrestlers in the world long before "Big Poppa Pump" exploded onto the scene. The only difference was, back then, Steiner drew a wide berth because he could stretch just about any opponent with his vast wrestling skills.

But Steiner wasn't much of an entertainer early in his career. That was left to his brother, Rick, who rode the scatter-brained jock gimmick for all it was worth. Scott was the quiet one, the more dangerous one.

Scott Steiner, a master of many suplex variations, takes Big Vito over effortlessly. Who says this guy's back is giving him problems?

Mike Awesome might be a very impressive WCW World champ one day, but that day will probably come after Steiner loses the title—and Steiner could feasibly be the champ for years to come.



What a difference about five years can make. Gone are the singlet and the strong, silent stoicism. In their place are 26-inch biceps, a short blond hairdo, a freak named Midajah, and an explosive temper that can be seen and heard from miles away.

Indeed, a lot has changed during Steiner's tenure in WCW. But two things have remained the same: Steiner can still wrestle ... and he's still dangerous.

So very, very dangerous.

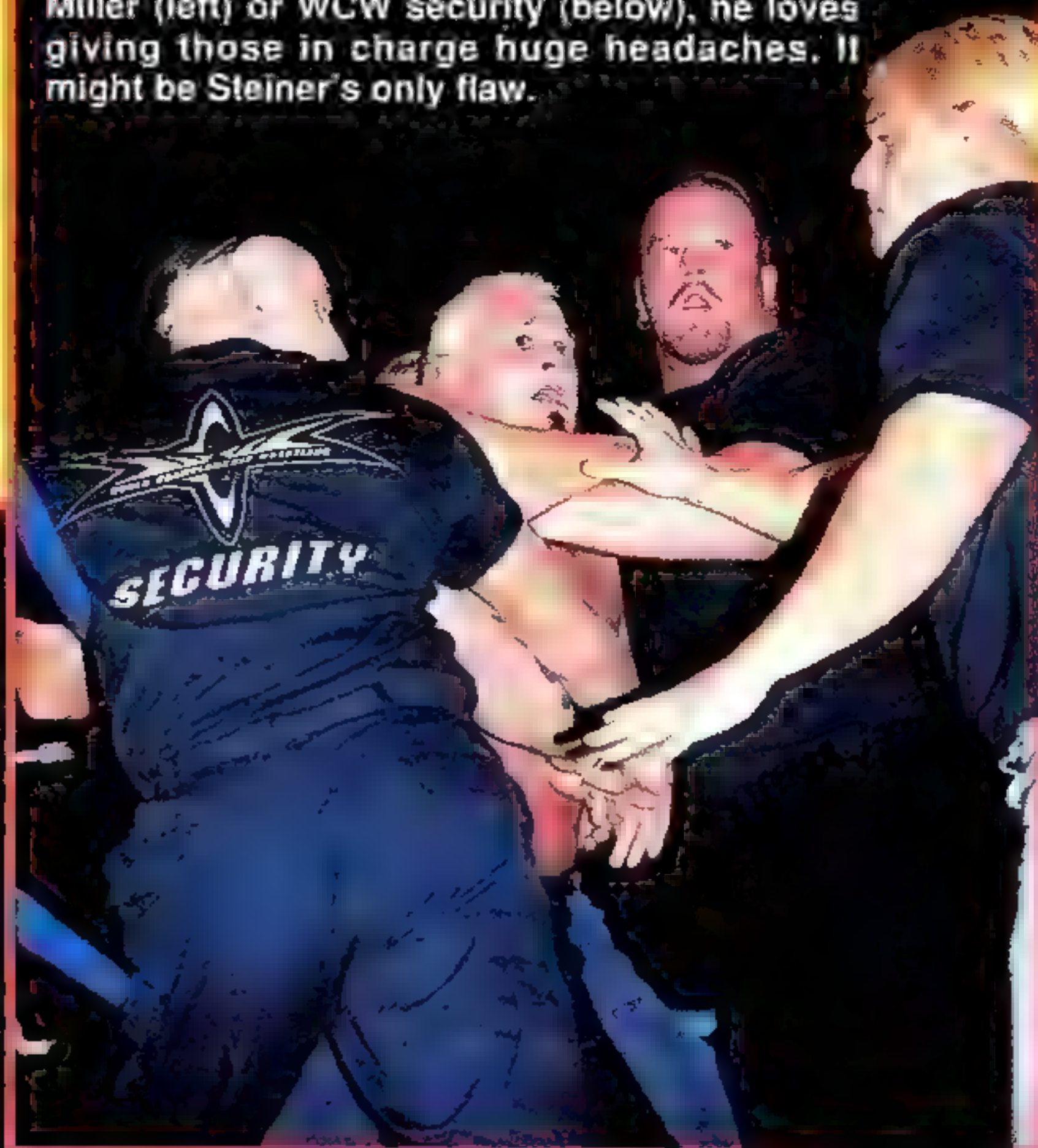
So far, the combination of his can't-look-away appeal and his natural ability has made for a win-win situation—not just for Scott, but for WCW, too. Finally, after months and months of directionless, passionless drivel, the federation has a bona fide superstar around whom it can build the company. As Ric Flair says, "Scott Steiner, you are the flagship of this company."

Though he seems like such an obvious choice to be WCW's savior, even his most loyal fans must recognize that Steiner might be a bit too reckless a man to invest the future of the company into.

Physically, there's no question that Scott has all



Scott Steiner does not like authority. He doesn't care if it's WCW Commissioner Ernest Miller (left) or WCW security (below), he loves giving those in charge huge headaches. It might be Steiner's only flaw.



the tools to lead WCW back up the professional wrestling ladder. Hey, those 26-inch guns aren't just for show. But emotionally, Scott Steiner's done little to prove that he's strong enough to carry the company into 2001.

In fact, most of Steiner's recent actions suggest that he is not.

While WCW desperately needs leadership, the last thing it needs is a leader who resorts to violence instead of diplomacy. "Big Poppa Pump" routinely intimidates anyone and everyone who gets in his way. And if he can't beat them inside the ring, he'll operate outside the rules to satisfy his desires and quell any detractor.

Even worse, Steiner does nothing to control his hair-trigger temper. And sometimes what he says is far more damaging to WCW than what he does.

Steiner's already been suspended without pay for blasting the promotion in unscripted interviews, and his mike work caused a rift with "Diamond" Dallas Page that escalated into a brief backstage brawl during one December *Nitro*.

He has been openly critical of Flair (who's now an ally) for his work in the ring and in the office and doesn't mind taking shots at the WWF's top stars on the air.

And it doesn't help that most of the WCW locker room fears him like death. In light of his recent attacks on Sting and Booker T, avoiding "Big Poppa Pump" seems like a wise business decision. But how can the World champ restore any prestige to the title if the best wrestlers in the company don't want to step into the ring with him?

"Scott's a loose cannon," said Kevin Nash, who

refuses to stand beside Steiner. "No doubt about it. He does what he wants when he wants. But I think he's gonna find out that he's not helping his cause—or WCW's cause—by running roughshod over the company. There are rules and regulations that Steiner has to abide by if he's gonna lead WCW."

But who's going to enforce those rules? So far, there haven't been many volunteers. Are Nash, Page, and Rick Steiner really the men for the job? Booker T and Sting have been out with serious injuries since they wrestled him. Sid Vicious, due to the gruesome leg injury he suffered while wrestling Steiner at the Sin pay-per-view in January, is out, too. But despite the way Steiner has seemingly decimated WCW's roster, there's still a faction of the locker room that says Steiner's just what WCW needs.

"I don't care who you are," said Jeff Jarrett, a Steiner confidant. "When Scott Steiner's in the ring, you stop and watch him. When he talks, you shut up and listen. What else can you ask for?"

Is that sincerity speaking—or fear? Regardless, there is some truth to what both Nash and Jarrett have to say. There hasn't been much reason to keep the dial tuned to TNT at 9:00 Eastern on Monday nights, but if anyone can supply one, it's certainly Scott Steiner.

He is controversial, he is entertaining. And even if his actions are detrimental to WCW, doesn't the fact that he draws viewers make it okay?

Apparently, WCW thinks it is. He's the World champ, and WCW has anointed him its top dog. But if Scott Steiner's lack of self-control proves to be his undoing, the federation will come tumbling down all around him. □



THE WRESTL

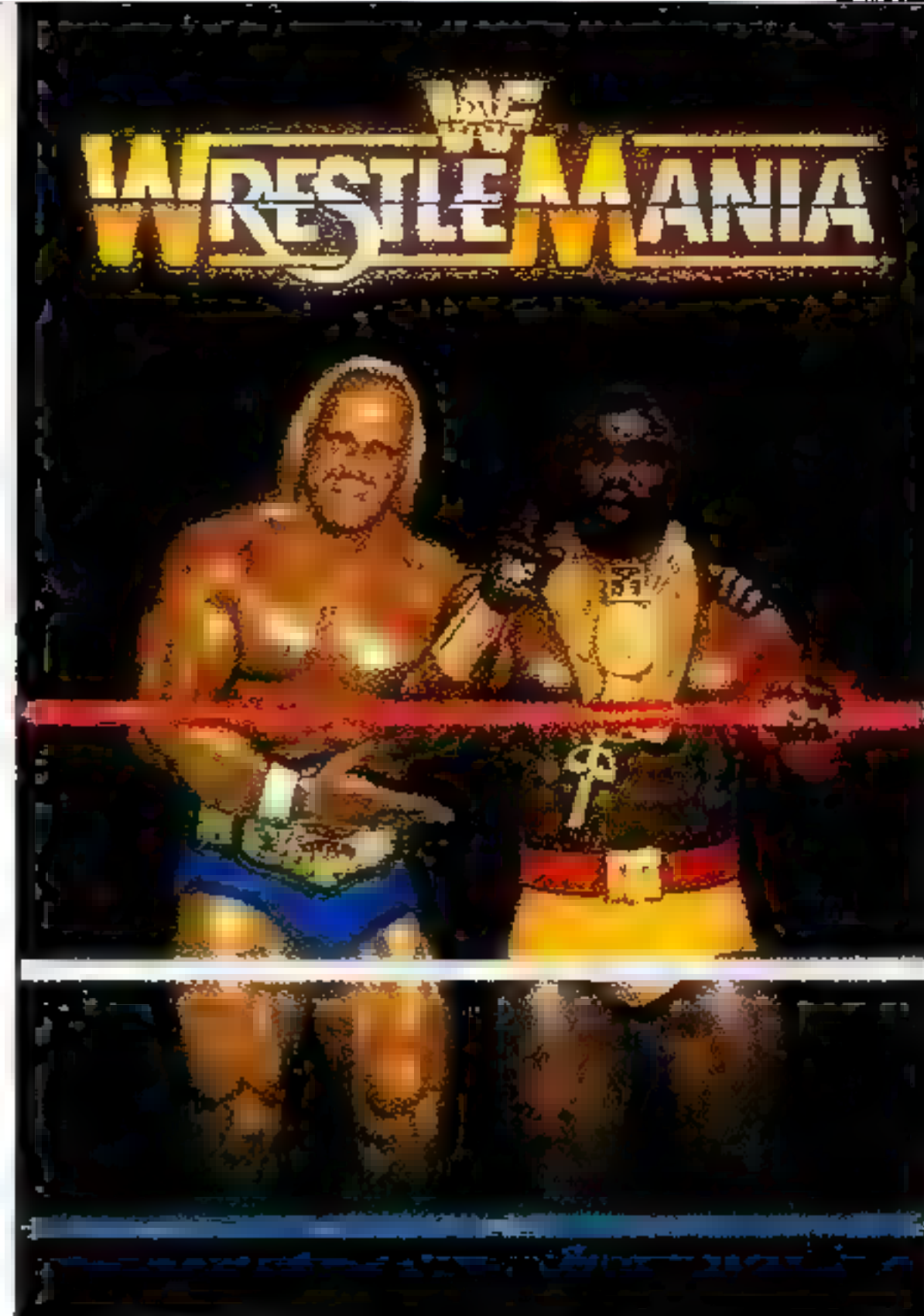


By Harry Burkett

THE PROGRAMS AREN'T printed far in advance. Heading toward the big event, win-loss records don't necessarily matter. There are no playoffs, unless you count the Royal Rumble.

Simply put, it's almost impossible to predict the lineup for WrestleMania. The winner of the Rumble is supposed to receive a World title shot at the WWF's premier event, but there are so many twists, turns, *Raws*, and *Smackdowns* leading to 'Mania, and even a pay-per-view in between, that it makes that traditional concept difficult to realize.

WrestleMania XVII will be no different. Fans can't be absolutely certain of the main event until they see the edition of *Smackdown* airing three days prior to the show.



Forget SummerSlam, Survivor Series, and even Starrcade. WrestleMania enjoys a legacy all its own. And it's never too late to take this crash course in WrestleMania 101!

EMANIA TIP SHEET

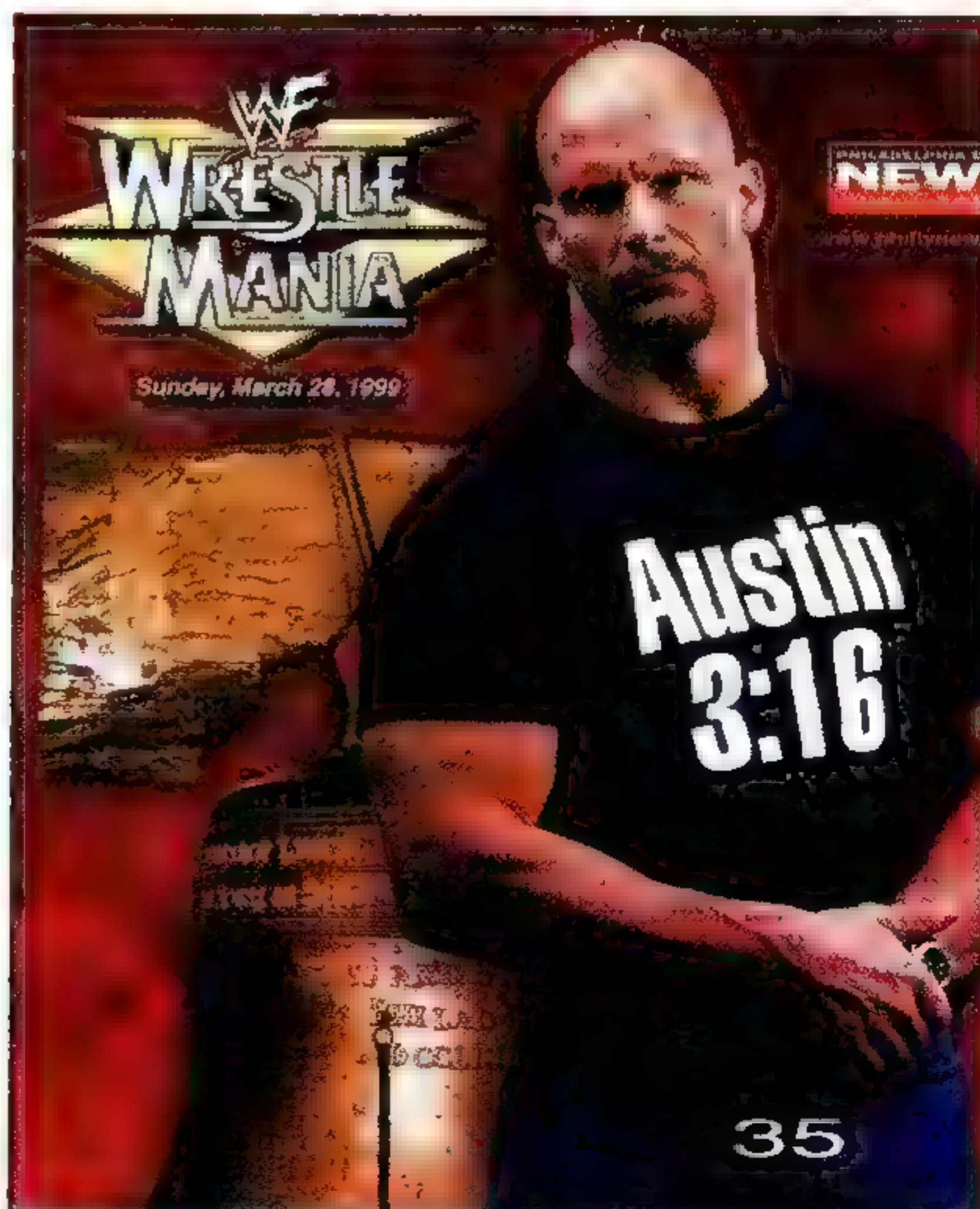
What you must know about the event of the year

For all the things we didn't know about WrestleMania XVII at press time, there are plenty of things we do know about WrestleMania in general. And those are things you *must* know about wrestling's biggest PPV of the year.

To give you some idea of where WrestleMania is going, we'll give you a sense of where it's been ... and who the major players will be at this year's show.

We expect The Rock and perhaps Shawn Michaels to avenge previous WrestleMania losses. Expect Steve Austin and Triple-H to cement their WrestleMania legends. Kurt Angle, Chris Benoit, Rikishi, and Chris Jericho want to be part of WrestleMania lore. The Undertaker has little left to prove.

We have compiled the vital statistics and background information to prepare you for the viewing of the event, and to help you analyze the fallout once the pinfalls have been counted. Here it is, the ultimate primer for WrestleManiacs everywhere!



WRESTLEMANIA XVII

the players

What kind of momentum do the WWF's top superstars have going into WrestleMania? Some of them had good all-around years, while some came on strong late in 2000. Another factor to consider is their individual histories at WrestleMania. Do they shine or choke at the big one?

This is our exclusive analysis, along with the WrestleMania win-loss records of each major player. We also predict each star's chances for success at WrestleMania XVII, rating their outlook as "excellent," "good," "fair," or "poor."

kurt angle (0-2)

The WWF World champion lost his initial WrestleMania match last year, despite having all sorts of momentum going into the event. He had captured the Intercontinental and European titles and possessed one of the best win-loss records in the WWF, although, technically, he was still a rookie. Yet he was at a distinct disadvantage at WrestleMania 2000 because he was forced to defend both titles in a three-way match against Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit, which we will consider two matches for the purpose of this exercise. He lost the I-C belt to Benoit in the first fall and dropped the European strap to Jericho in the second. The traumatic loss reduced Angle to tears.

Chances for victory at WMXVII: Poor



Steve Austin's best performance at WrestleMania may have come in his only WrestleMania loss—a defeat to Bret Hart in an "I Quit" bout at WMXIII.



Although he's in control of Chris Jericho here, Kurt Angle did not have any reason to get excited about his first appearance at WrestleMania. He lost two belts!

steve austin (3-1)

"Stone-Cold," under the management of Ted DiBiase, defeated Savio Vega at WrestleMania XII; his biggest WWF win up to that time. His greatest victory ever took place at WrestleMania XIV, when he beat Shawn Michaels for his first WWF title. Austin remained on the disabled list as a result of his spinal surgery when WrestleMania 2000 rolled around. Austin's one WrestleMania loss occurred in 1996, when he passed out while locked in Bret Hart's sharpshooter in an "I Quit" match. Austin's refusal to surrender despite having blood coursing down his face is an unforgettable moment.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Excellent

did you know ... ?

... Rikishi has appeared at WrestleMania three times under three different names?

... Ric Flair lost his one and only WrestleMania match?

... WrestleMania II emanated from New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles?

... Bobby Heenan pinned Koko B. Ware in a six-man match at WrestleMania IV?

... Security concerns stemming from the Persian Gulf War caused WrestleMania VII to be moved from the L.A. Coliseum to the much smaller L.A. Sports Arena?

... Bob Backlund, Yokozuna, Razor Ramon (Scott Hall), Lex

Luger, and the Steiners, all made their WrestleMania debuts at WrestleMania IX?

... The WWF World title changed hands at WrestleMania every year from 1988 to 1994?

... Radio talk show host and ex-Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy was a ringside judge for the Mr. T-Roddy Piper boxing match at WrestleMania II?

... Steve Allen served as an interviewer at WrestleMania VI, years before he became chairman of the PTC?

... Singers of the national anthem have included Little Richard, Reba McEntire, Willie Nelson, Robert Goulet, Gladys Knight, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, and Gene Okerlund?



Gladys Knight at WMIV

the **ROCK** (2-2)

He's the hottest young property in WWF history, capturing five World titles in three years, but his WrestleMania record is lackluster. He got off to a good start, however, at WrestleMania XIII, when he successfully defended the Intercontinental title against The Sultan, now known as Rikishi. Another I-C title defense the following year saw The Rock defend against Ken Shamrock. Rocky screamed, "I quit!" while trapped in Shamrock's ankle

lock, but retained the title because his challenger refused to break the hold and attacked several federation officials. The decision was eventually reversed. Rock fared even worse at WrestleMania XV, losing the World title to Steve Austin. Then he lost the fatal four-way match at WrestleMania XVI. He must survive the WrestleMania curse this year.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Good



WrestleMania hasn't been particularly kind to The Rock. He dropped the WWF title to Steve Austin at WMXV and again lost in the main event in 2000.

the undertaker (7-0)

He has the most impressive win-loss record in WrestleMania history, surpassing Hulk Hogan's by two victories. The Undertaker's victims have been Big Bossman, Kane, Diesel (Kevin Nash), King Kong Bundy, Giant Gonzales, Jake Roberts, and Jimmy Snuka. His greatest victory was at WrestleMania XIII, when he pinned Sid Vicious for his third WWF title. Injuries sidelined 'Taker during WrestleMania X and WrestleMania 2000. The Undertaker tends to win when everything, or nothing, is on the line. He will be hard-pressed to receive a singles match for the WWF title at WrestleMania XVII, but he could be in the mix if there's a three-way or four-way main event.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Good

All hail the WrestleMania king. The Undertaker has never lost at 'Mania and won one of his three WWF titles by vanquishing Sid Vicious at WMXIII.



Triple-H's 'Mania record would be perfect if he hadn't been the man fed to The Ultimate Warrior in Warrior's comeback match at WMXII.

triple-h (4-1)

"The Game" is behind only The Undertaker and Hulk Hogan in terms of WrestleMania victories. To put it in historical perspective, he's on par with Randy Savage, Bret Hart, and The Ultimate Warrior. Ironically, it was Helmsley who helped pad the Warrior's impressive WrestleMania record, losing to him in 1:38 at WrestleMania XII. Since 1997, however, Helmsley has been unstoppable, accumulating victories over Kane, Owen Hart, and Goldust, and retaining the WWF title in the fatal four-way last year. With that successful defense, Triple-H became the only heel to win a WrestleMania main event. With Austin healthy and The Rock more focused, he will have a harder time this year.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Fair

chris benoit (1-1)

"The Crippler" captured the Intercontinental title in his first WrestleMania appearance. Not a bad showing. He and Chris Jericho both were successful against Kurt Angle, who lost the I-C title to Benoit and the European belt to Jericho in a three-way match for both straps. Benoit has displayed the ability to win big matches, or at least come extremely close. An I-C title match is most likely for this year's WrestleMania, with hopes for main-event status postponed until 2002.

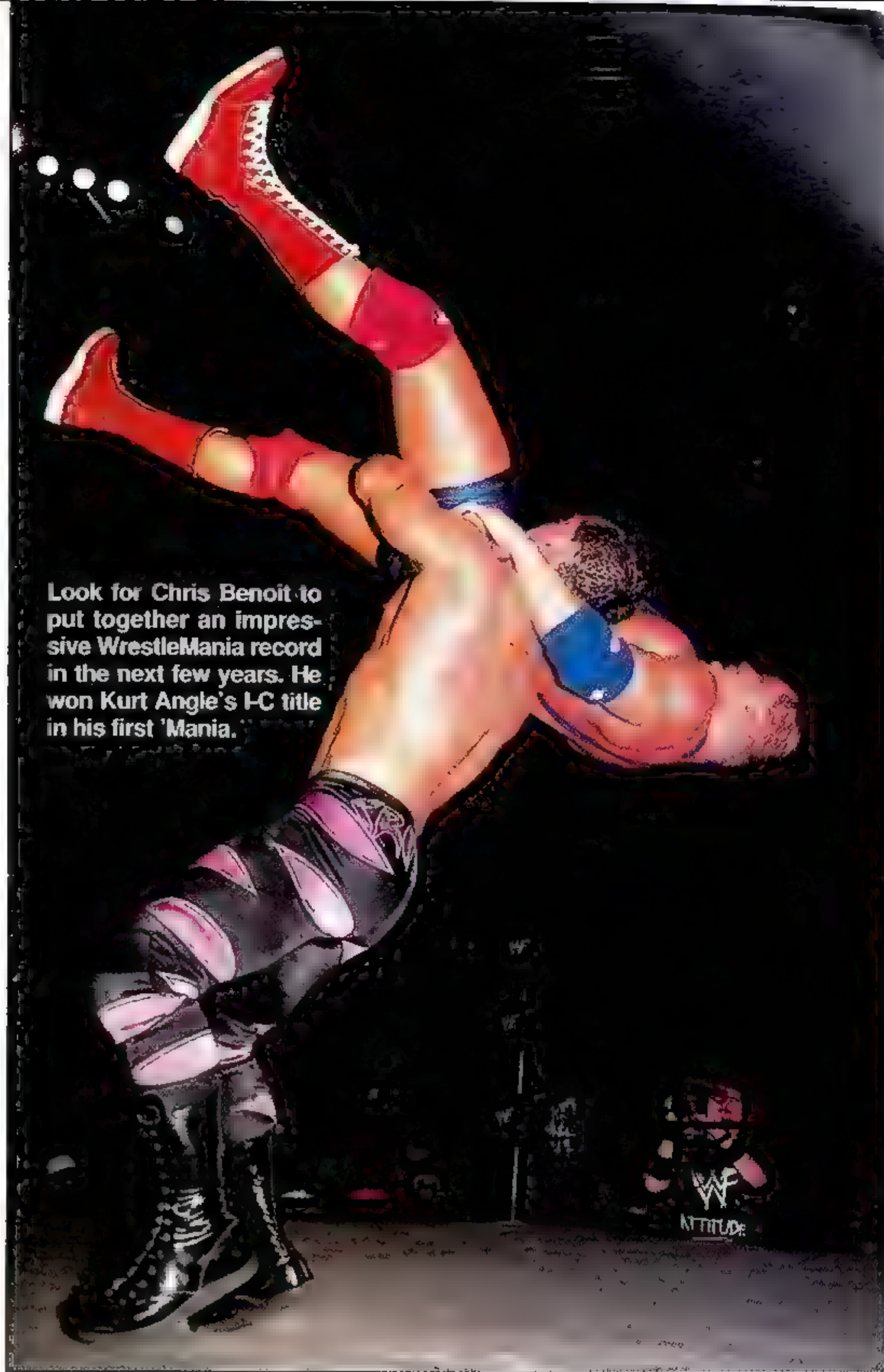
Odds for victory at WMXVII: Good

william regal (0-0)

The European champion is the only major player never to have competed at WrestleMania. Regal will feel immense pressure at wrestling's biggest show. Through all his years in WCW, he's never come close to headlining a pay-per-view. He has the benefit of successfully defending titles in tough situations, most notably the WCW TV belt, but the United Kingdom's goodwill ambassador will discover that WrestleMania is light years from *WCW Saturday Night*. Regal would probably win a mid-card or undercard match, although a main-event opportunity would place him out of his league ... at least for now.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Fair

Look for Chris Benoit to put together an impressive WrestleMania record in the next few years. He won Kurt Angle's I-C title in his first 'Mania.



It took three gimmicks and about six years for Rikishi to finally get a 'Mania win. He celebrated last year by planting his backside in Tori's face.

rikishi (1-2)

Despite his veteran status in the WWF, Rikishi has appeared at WrestleMania only three times ... and never made a big difference. He and Samu, as The Headshrinkers, lost to Rick and Scott Steiner at WrestleMania IX. As The Sultan, he lost to Intercontinental champ Rocky Maivia at WrestleMania XIII. He finally achieved victory at last year's WrestleMania, when he teamed with Kane to defeat Road Dogg and X-Pac. Recent losses to The Undertaker and Steve Austin have stagnated his career again, making a singles victory at WrestleMania XVII essential.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Poor

RANKING THE STARS OF WRESTLEMANIA

More than 100 wrestlers have competed at WrestleMania and, for them, simply appearing at the sport's premier event is almost as noteworthy as emerging victorious. There are a remarkable few, however, who have not only won at WrestleMania, but become genuine showstoppers.

Here are our top 10 listings of the greatest WrestleMania competitors ever, considering singles win-loss records, individual performances, quality of opposition, and consistency over the years. We have included win-loss statistics, with third digits indicating draws, double-disqualifications, and countouts.

1. the undertaker (7-0)

First appearance: WrestleMania VII (1991)

Last appearance: WrestleMania XV (1999)

Greatest match: Defeated Sid Vicious for the WWF World title at WrestleMania XIII (1997)

2. hulk hogan (5-1-1)

First appearance: WrestleMania I (1985)

Last appearance: WrestleMania IX (1993)

Greatest match: Retained the WWF World title against Andre the Giant at WrestleMania III (1987)

3. randy savage (4-3)

First appearance: WrestleMania II (1986)

Last appearance: WrestleMania X (1994)

Greatest match: Defeated Ted DiBiase in the finals of the WWF World title tournament at WrestleMania IV (1988)

4. bret hart (4-3)

First appearance: WrestleMania II (1986)

Last appearance: WrestleMania XIII (1997)

Greatest match: Defeated Yokozuna for the WWF World title at WrestleMania X (1994)

5. triple-h (4-1)

First appearance: WrestleMania II (1996)

Last appearance: WrestleMania 2000

Greatest match: Retained the WWF World title in a four-way match also involving The Rock, Mick Foley, and The Big Show at WrestleMania 2000

6. steve austin (3-1)

First appearance: WrestleMania XII (1996)

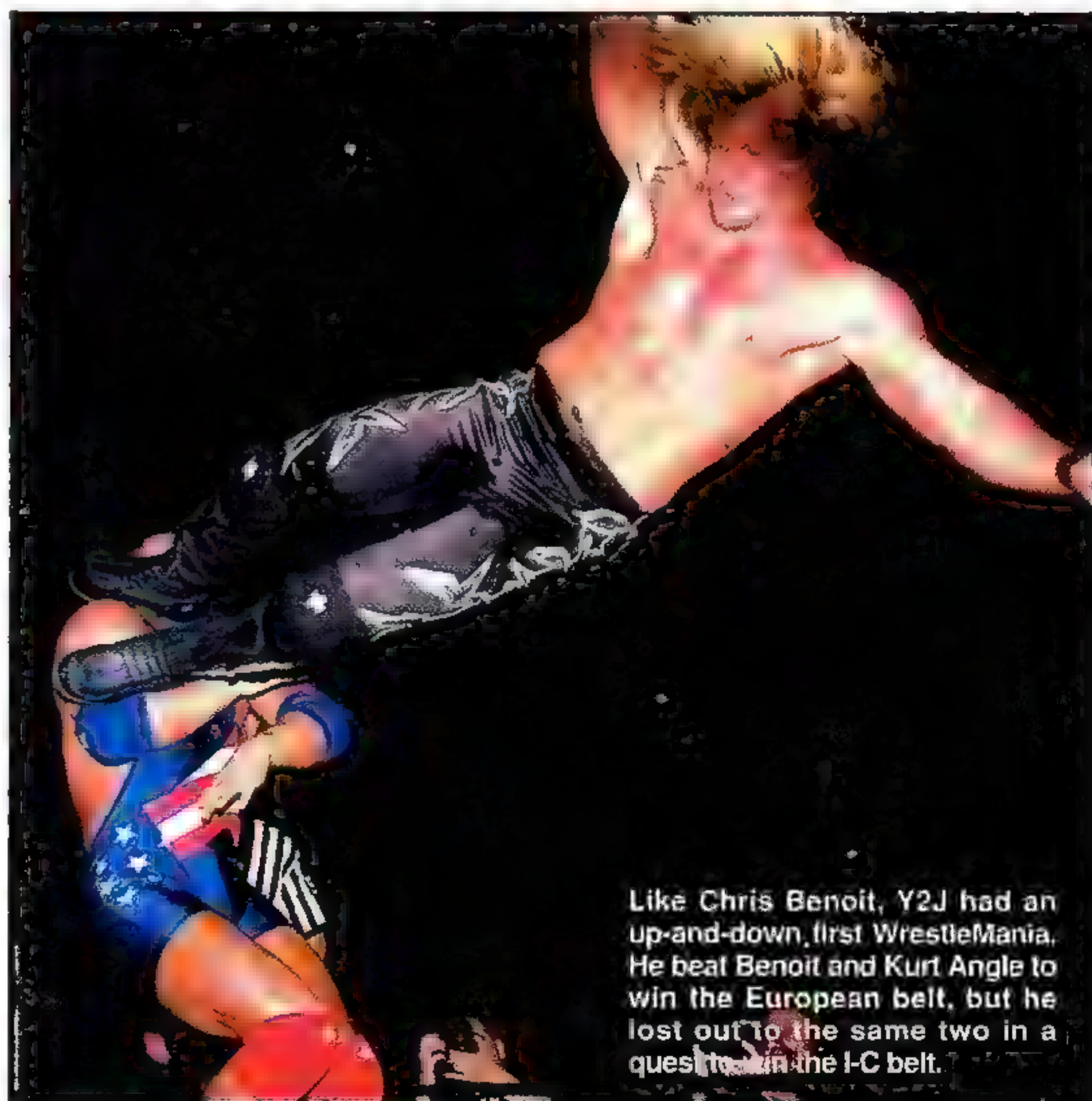
Last appearance: WrestleMania XV (1999)

Greatest match: Defeated Shawn Michaels for the WWF World title at WrestleMania XIV (1998)

chris jericho (1-1)

As Y2K drew to a close, so did Y2J's momentum. Jericho's appeal was diminished by last year's arrival of The Radicals, all of whom were approximately the same size and, as ex-WCW cruiserweights, employed similar wrestling styles. Jericho captured the European title from Kurt Angle in a three-way match also involving Chris Benoit last year, but he held the belt for only one day. Jericho's challenge is, even if he wins at WrestleMania, to make that victory mean something for the future. Angle and Benoit are crowding him out of the top tier, giving him little hope of being in the main event, let alone a big winner.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Fair



Like Chris Benoit, Y2J had an up-and-down first WrestleMania. He beat Benoit and Kurt Angle to win the European belt, but he lost out to the same two in a quest for the I-C belt.

7. the ultimate warrior (4-0)

First appearance: WrestleMania IV (1988)

Last appearance: WrestleMania XII (1996)

Greatest match: Defeated Hulk Hogan for the WWF World title at WrestleMania VI (1990)

8. shawn michaels (2-4)

First appearance: WrestleMania V (1989)

Last appearance: WrestleMania XIV (1998)

Greatest match: Defeated Bret Hart in an "Ironman" match for the WWF World title at WrestleMania XII (1996)

9. rick steamboat (3-1)

First appearance: WrestleMania I (1985)

Last appearance: WrestleMania IV (1988)

Greatest match: Defeated Randy Savage for the Intercontinental title at WrestleMania III (1987)

10. razor ramon (3-0)

First appearance: WrestleMania IX (1993)

Last appearance: WrestleMania XI (1995)

Greatest match: Retained the Intercontinental title against Shawn Michaels in a ladder match at WrestleMania X (1994)



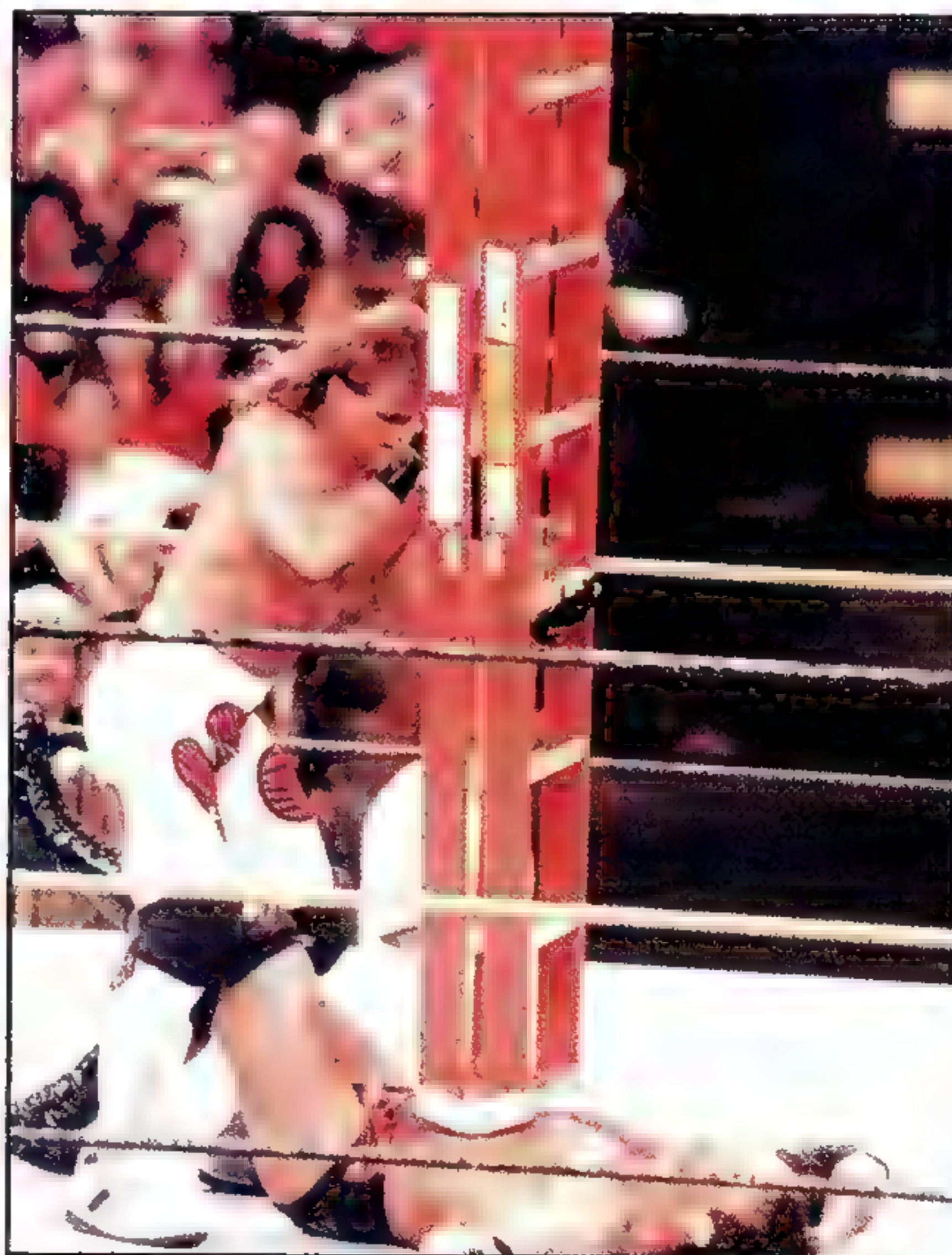
Taker's the man at 'Mania

Shawn Michaels has a surprisingly poor WrestleMania record, though he has wrestled some brilliant matches, including his ladder match with Razor Ramon at WMX.

shawn michaels (2-4)

A blotch on HBK's otherwise sensational career is his substandard record at WrestleMania: two wins and four losses. His WWF title victory over Bret Hart in an "Ironman" match at WrestleMania XII was his greatest win ever. His WrestleMania VIII victory over Tito Santana wasn't as notable, but was a genuine stepping-stone in his career. Unfortunately, all of his losses were high profile, boosting the careers of Steve Austin, Diesel (Kevin Nash), Razor Ramon (Scott Hall), and Tatanka. It's his WrestleMania XIV loss to Austin that stings the most, and would be the primary factor in his decision to make a one-night-only comeback. A championship victory for Michaels is unlikely, but a hard-fought grudge match is possible.

Odds for victory at WMXVII: Fair



hotseat

DEAN MALENKO

"LITA DOESN'T KNOW SHE'S IN LOVE WITH ME!"

WHEN DEAN MALENKO made the leap to the WWF from WCW last winter with Perry Saturn, Eddie Guerrero, and Chris Benoit, most of the fans already knew he was an excellent technical wrestler. After all, he'd been known as "The Man Of 1,000 Holds" in WCW and was the number-one man in the 1997 "PWI 500."

So it was no surprise that Malenko was the first member of The Radicals to win gold when he defeated Essa Rios for the WWF light heavyweight championship.

The fans also knew about Malenko's low-key, no-nonsense demeanor in the ring. Again, it was no surprise that Dean, who had displayed little charisma in his career, wrestled most of his bouts on *Jakked* and *Heat* as opposed to *Raw* and *Smackdown*.

But the one thing the fans didn't know, and what we're all finding out now, is that Dean Malenko has one hell of a womanizing streak in him. How can that be, you might ask. Dean Malenko is a married man, isn't he?

He sure is. But that hasn't stopped "The Iceman" from pursuing his love/hate obsession with the ever-popular Lita, a woman who wants nothing to do with him on either side of the ring. Ask Malenko how he can treat his better half so callously and he'll tell you, "My wife's married, not me."

Senior Writer Frank Krewda caught up with a smitten Malenko after a recent episode of *Raw Is War*. Shockingly, the scientific master made it clear that takeovers and cloverleaves are the furthest thing from his mind. Malenko is lovestruck and seems determined to chase Lita until she feels the same way—even if his career suffers.

Q: Dean, I've seen some pretty persistent guys in my time. But even

"Believe me, I have nothing to be desperate about. I can jump into a hot shower with Lita anytime I want to. We have that kind of relationship."

my most desperate buddies never stalked a girl in the shower like you did to Lita tonight.

A: Oh no? Maybe your buddies weren't desperate enough. *(Laughs)* Believe me, I have nothing to be desperate about. I can jump into a hot shower with Lita anytime I want to. We have that kind of relationship.

Q: Really? Judging by her reaction, Lita didn't seem very receptive to

the idea. In fact, she looked downright terrified.

A: That's just because the cameraman was poking around the ladies room. Actually, she was overwhelmed with romance. She totally loved it.

Q: If you say so. But this much is certain—Matt and Jeff Hardy sure didn't like it. They almost took your leg off. I guess you'll think twice before you scrub up in the women's shower again.

A: I'm gonna let you in on a little secret. Nobody, especially The Hardy Boyz, will ever stop me from seeing my lady. I don't care if she's in the shower, on the toilet, or in the ring. And speaking of the Hardys, what the hell were they doing in the ladies shower, anyway? What are they, Lita's chaperones? Maybe if they spent more time wrestling and less time worrying about Lita's love life, they'd do a little better in the ring.

Q: It's interesting that you bring that up, Dean. Because it seems that ever since you became interested in winning Lita's heart, you've become less interested in winning matches. In case you haven't noticed, your little fling hasn't exactly helped your win-loss record.

A: It's interesting you bring that





"When you have a young girl who's crazy about you, who worships the ground you walk on, you have to show an interest in her. Otherwise, she feels alienated and inadequate."



Unfortunately for Dean Malenko, the Hardys aren't letting him work out his "relationship" with Lita one-on-one. Dean has been pretty brutal in his attacks on Matt (shown) and Jeff.

up. You know why? Because that just shows how much you know about what's been happening in the WWF. In case you haven't noticed, I won a date with my sweetheart.

Q: Are you kidding me? You won that match by beating the tar out of her. Then you were duped—in bed no less—when Matt and Jeff caught up with you in the hotel room.

A: See, and you call me a stalker.

Q: That's right. When you're not following Lita into a bathroom, you're slapping her around in the ring. The poor girl can't even get a moment's privacy. Before the match, you're there. After the match, you're there. Even during promos ...

A: Wow, you know even less about women than you know about the wrestling business. I didn't think that was possible. Look, Lita loves me. But here's the problem: Lita doesn't know she's in love with me! She's young and doesn't really know what she wants. That's why I have to send her a reminder every now and then.

Q: You mean like a bulldog or a suplex?

A: Now you're catching on. You see, when you have a young girl who's crazy about you, who worships the ground you walk on, you have to show an interest in her. Otherwise, she feels alienated and inadequate. I'm just showing Lita that I'm always there for her. She knows that, and let me tell you, she appreciates it.

Q: Is that why she interferes in your matches and makes you look like a fool every chance she gets?

A: Now you're getting stupid on me again. That's just Lita's way of trying to get my attention. It's obvious she wants to play a bigger role in my life. What better way than getting involved in my career. Sure, it makes for some crazy moments in the ring, but I can't fault the poor girl for wanting to spend more time with me.

Q: But, Dean, you already have a wife you should be spending time with.

A: But I also have to make time for Lita. It's a sin, but what would she do without me? Look, I'm not trying to do anything wrong here. But right now, I have a situation on my hands, and my wife is behind me 100 percent.

Q: Come on now. I doubt she supports what you're doing.

A: Well, apparently you don't understand things very well.

Q: Don't you feel the least bit guilty that you've been chasing another woman on national television for months?

A: I'm just doing this to make Lita feel good about herself.

Q: Okay, whatever. So tell me, lover boy, how do you intend to rendezvous with Lita while you're out with that bum knee?

A: See, that's where I'm so lucky. I have Lita to travel with me on the road and nurse my wounds, help me rehab. Of course, she'll have to cut down on her match schedule until I'm 100 percent, but if I know my dove, she'll be more than happy to do it.

Q: Won't you have to clear that with The Hardy Boyz before you take Lita off the road?

A: I don't have to clear anything with anybody. And The Hardy Boyz better use their time wisely while I'm out, because they're gonna have hell to pay when I come back. And they better learn to stay out of my business, too. You know, Lita's getting annoyed with the Hardys

for always following her around and trying to protect her. She's not their property. I'm not sure that friendship is going to last.

Q: *What have The Radicals had to say about your fling? I don't remember seeing any one of them come to your rescue backstage while Matt and Jeff worked you over.*

A: That's because I told them I wanted to be alone with Lita for a while. And that's the beauty of being part of such an elite

group. They don't feel slighted when you want to do your own thing. They're not insecure. They know that if I want to team with The Goodfather, or if Eddie wants to shack up with Chyna, or Perry with Terri, that no matter what happens—even if we have to wrestle against each other like we did in the past—we'll always return to the fold. That's what separates us from the rest of the clowns in the WWF. So they support me, as usual.

Q: *It doesn't bother them that they have a womanizer in their camp?*

A: Whoa! That's a strong accusation. Even if it were true, the guys don't care what I do as long as I hold up my fourth of the deal.

Q: *But that's just it, Dean. Ever since you started messing around with Lita, you haven't looked like "The Man Of 1,000 Holds."*

A: Well, what can I say. Everything goes out the window when you're in love. You don't train right, you don't wrestle right,

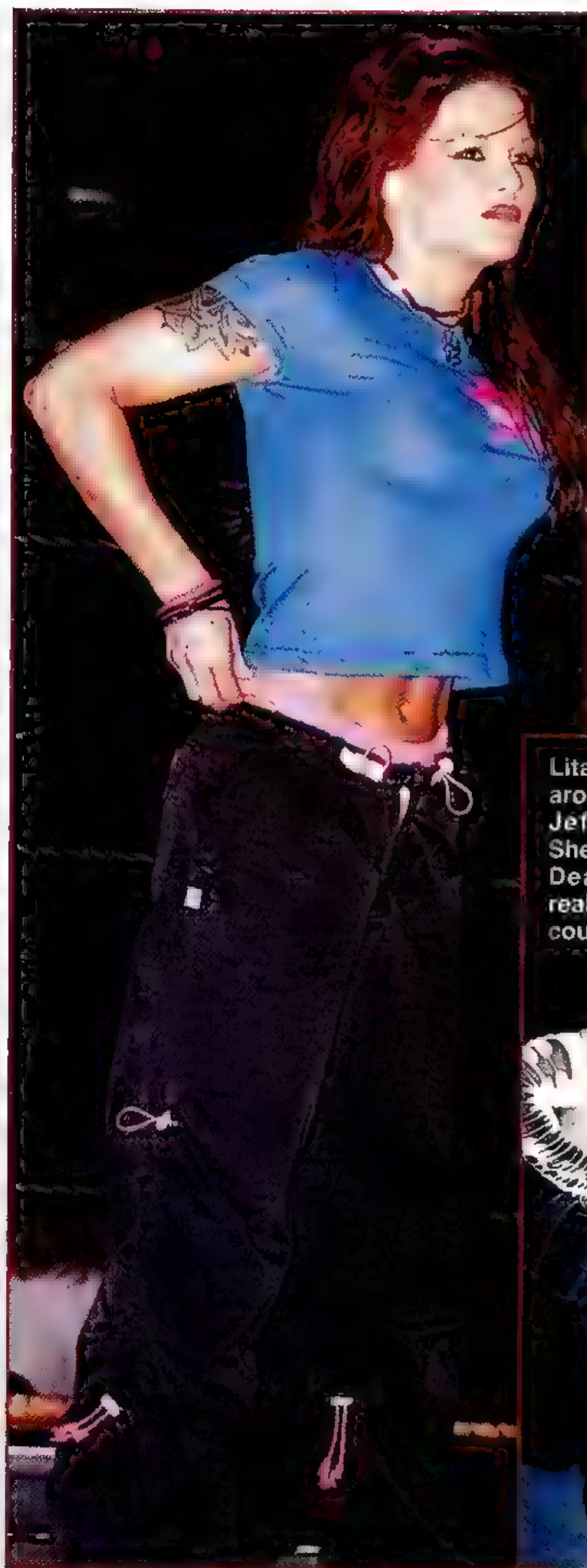


"Lita's getting annoyed with the Hardys for always following her around and trying to protect her. She's not their property. I'm not sure that friendship is going to last."

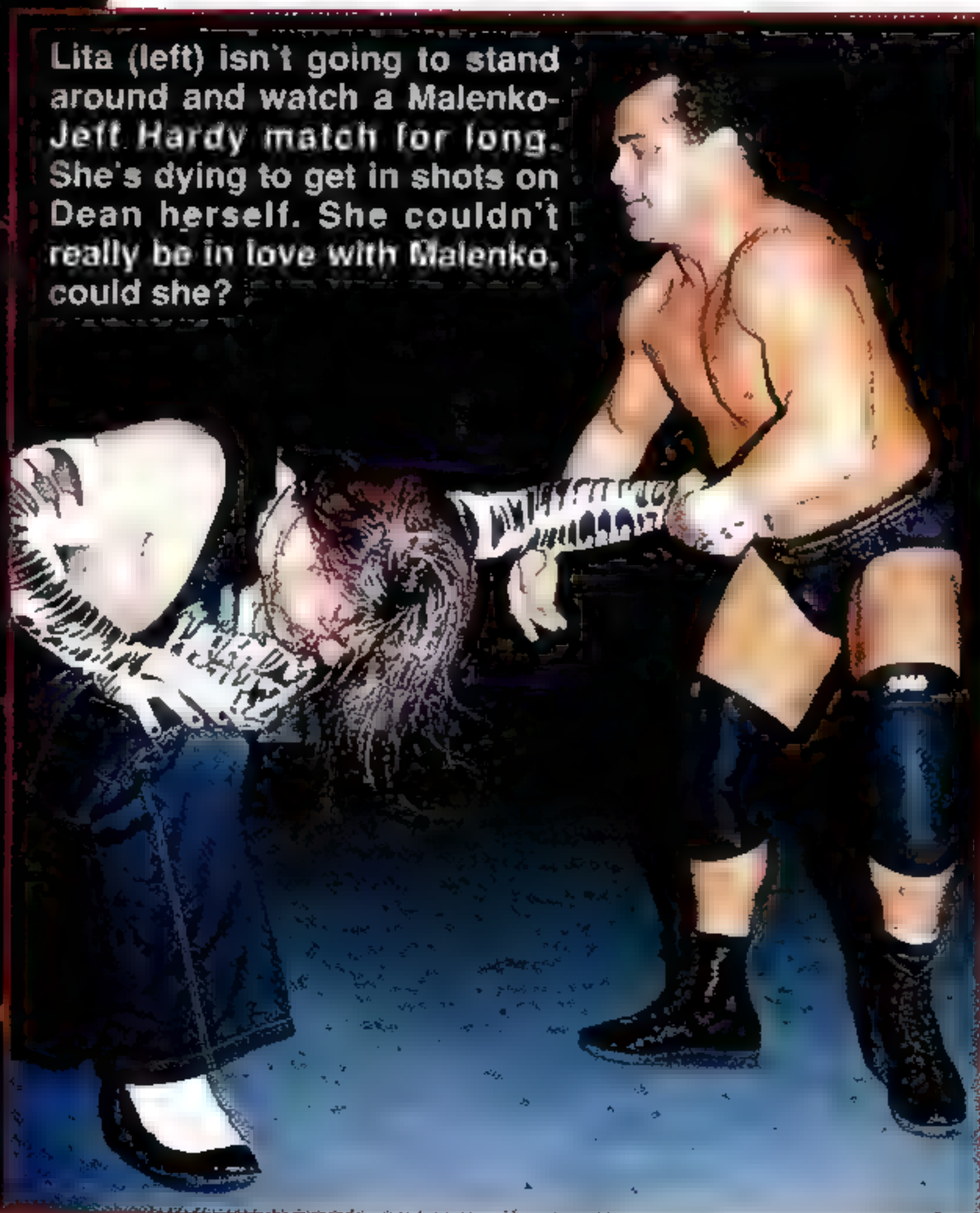
you don't eat right. Hell, some days, you don't even eat at all. Maybe you should try falling in love, buddy. *(Laughs)* Seriously, though, the boys know I'm physically talented enough to get the job done—even if my mind's someplace else.

Q: *Well, I have to admit, I never thought I'd see "The Iceman" melt before our very eyes. And to think, over a girl young enough to be your niece. Wrestling is a crazy business.*

A: Yeah, well, I gotta go. I'm gonna be on the shelf for a while, and I want to say goodbye to Lita before she leaves the arena. She'd be crushed if I didn't. □

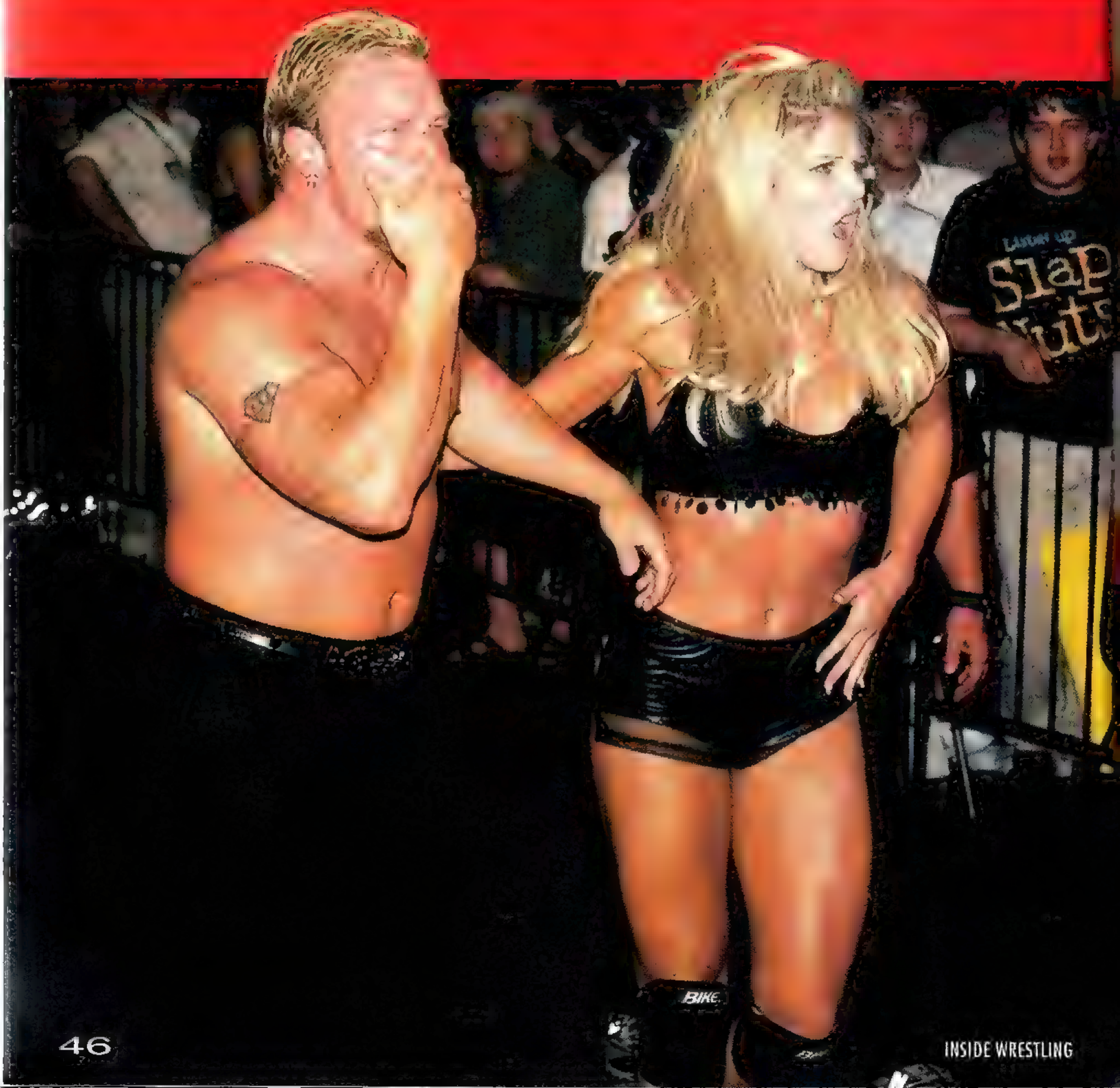


Lita (left) isn't going to stand around and watch a Malenko-Jeff Hardy match for long. She's dying to get in shots on Dean herself. She couldn't really be in love with Malenko, could she?



EX

APPEAL!





So far, Shane Douglas has only had two different women by his side since returning to WCW. There was, of course, the lovely Terrie Wilson (opposite page), but don't forget that Asya was briefly part of Shane's Revolution clique, and that group terrorized Terrie for a while (above).

The More Women Shane Loses, The More Attractive He Becomes!

"The Franchise" may be one of wrestling's baddest bad boys, but no matter how many women he loses, there are always plenty willing to take their place

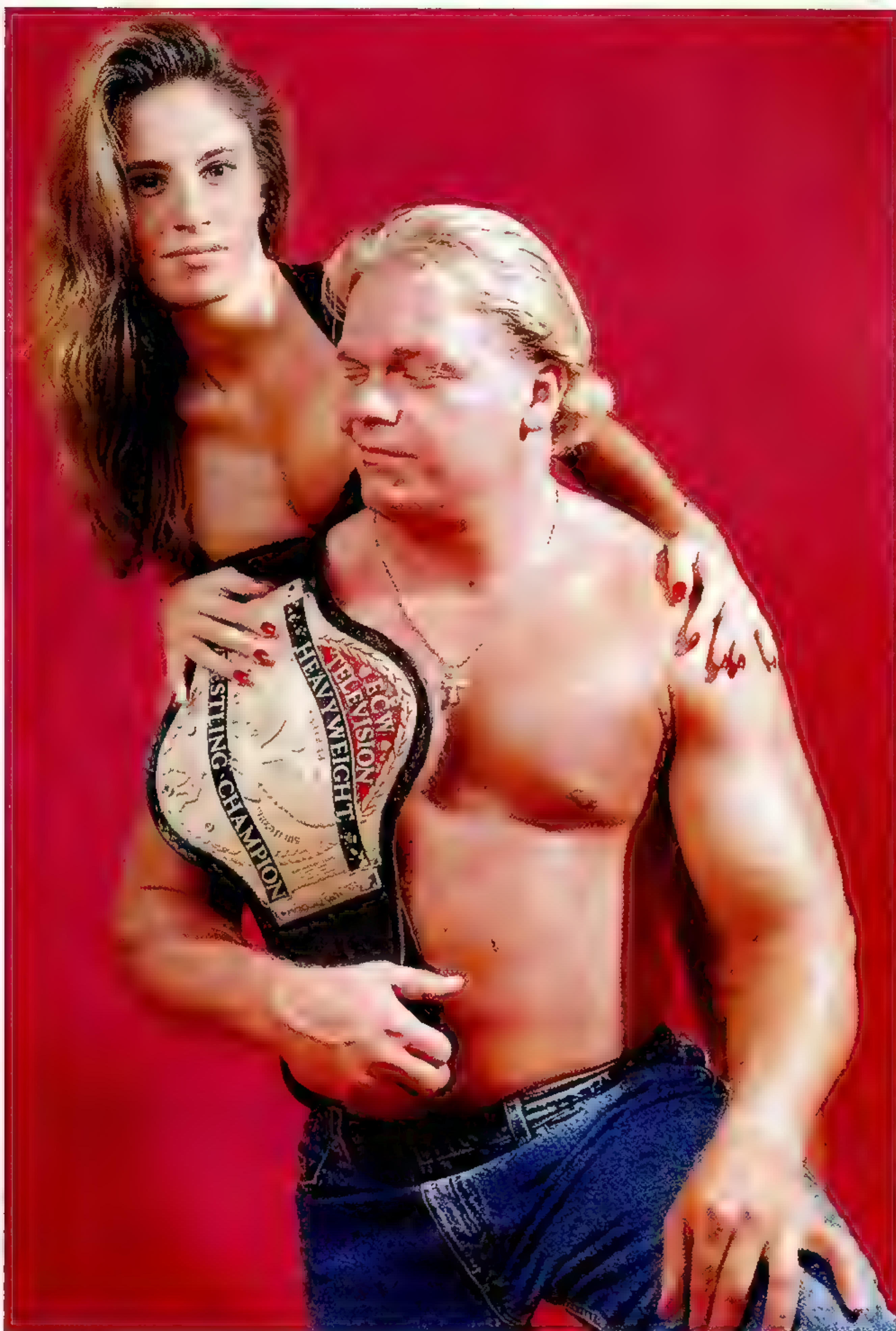
ladies' pulses pounding. And that's why for every Jennifer Lopez, there's a legion of forlorn nice guys wondering what in the world she's doing with Puff Daddy.

By Dan Murphy

"JUST DON'T understand what she sees in that guy."

That's the Nice Guy Lament, immediately recognizable to 99 percent of the male population. It's what nice guys declare to a sympathetic bartender; it's what nice guys say to their best friends; it's what nice guys say to themselves whenever the girl of their dreams won't give them the time of day.

See, as a rule, women don't tend to be attracted to nice guys. Instead, it's the bad boys who get the



Perhaps "The Franchise's" best partnership was the one he had with Francine in ECW. She stuck by him through good and bad times and was there when he won both the ECW TV and heavyweight championships.

Every nice guy knows all of this already. Every nice guy wonders why it's always the loudmouths, the jerks, and the bullies who get the girls.

Shane Douglas isn't a nice guy. Shane Douglas doesn't want to be a nice guy. And the girls don't want him to be, either.

Nice guys don't refer to their lady friends as "head cheerleaders." Shane Douglas does. Nice guys don't insist on putting their lady friends in harm's way nightly to advance their own careers. Shane Douglas

does. And nice guys don't use woman after woman for as long as they can before moving on to the next victim.

Shane Douglas does. He's part of that one percent who has never wondered why nice guys finish last.

Douglas' "ex" list reads like a who's who of wrestling valets. You had Sherri Martel and Woman back in the early days of ECW, Missy Hyatt on a handful of independent shows, Francine in the late-1990s, and Torrie Wilson for a portion of his WCW stint. Those were all fruitful alliances. The cheerleaders watched Douglas' back, distracted his opponents, riled the fans, and interfered in "The Franchise's" matches. In turn, Douglas made them bigger stars. Everyone won.

Then, sooner or later, he kicked each one of them to the curb and found another pretty face to stand next to him. And for every cheerleader Douglas dumps, another dozen are ready to take her place.

"I could never get over how many girls were dying to get a piece of Shane," said Bam Bam Bigelow, one of Douglas' former partners in ECW's Triple Threat. "In every town we went to, there were four or five women who wanted to be the next Francine. Some were managers from the indy circuit, others were housewives who were head over heels for the guy. What can I say? The guy's a ladies man."

While his athletic build, disarming smile, and overwhelming confidence earned Douglas a share of female followers, Bigelow contends Douglas' utter professionalism is what gets him the girls.

"Shane and I have had some personal differences over the years, but the guy is all business in the ring," Bigelow said. "He holds the ropes for his valet—he just puts the girl up on a pedestal. Anything she wants, she gets. He treats everyone with complete respect, even when he breaks things off. I'd

be willing to bet each and every woman who's ever managed Shane in the past would come back to him the moment he asked."

Douglas seems to perform better with a woman in his corner as well. With Francine, Douglas established himself as one of ECW's toughest and most dominant champions ever. Perhaps his finest moment came when Douglas dedicated his title win over Bigelow to Francine after a Bigelow powerslam fractured Francine's pelvis in 1997. After the match, Douglas admitted that he felt he had to defend Francine's honor and that the sight of her hobbling around ringside on crutches gave him all the inspiration he needed to beat Bigelow. That title reign lasted nearly 14 months.

More recently, Douglas broke out of a lengthy slump in WCW once he aligned himself with Torrie Wilson.



Okay, so they weren't long-lasting partnerships, but both Sherri Martel (left) and Woman (above) were happy to provide backup for "The Franchise" during the early days of ECW.





Either of you ladies interested?

THE BEST WOMAN FOR THE JOB

If the past is any indication, it won't be long before Shane Douglas starts recruiting his next "head cheerleader," and WCW offers some very attractive options. Here are a few of the women Shane should consider as the latest in his string of valets.

Paisley. We still don't understand exactly what Paisley is doing with Kwee-Wee. She has the looks and is willing to mix it up from time to time, which are two very important qualities where Shane is concerned. But Shane can't stand Kwee-Wee's effeminate theatrics, and it would be hard to imagine him even carrying on a conversation with a woman who has managed both Kwee-Wee and The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea. Douglas likes his women made of sterner stuff.

Midajah. Obviously, there would be no quicker way for Douglas to get World title shots than to try to lure Midajah away from Scott Steiner. But is Douglas ready to tangle with "The Genetic Freak," especially when Steiner's enraged at someone for stealing one of his "freaks"? This would be a calculated risk that could make or break Douglas' WCW career, but would Midajah be willing to leave Steiner

Douglas beat both Madusa and Billy Kidman while Torrie hung on for dear life in the scaffold match at Fall Brawl, and just like that, Douglas was a top contender for the U.S. title.

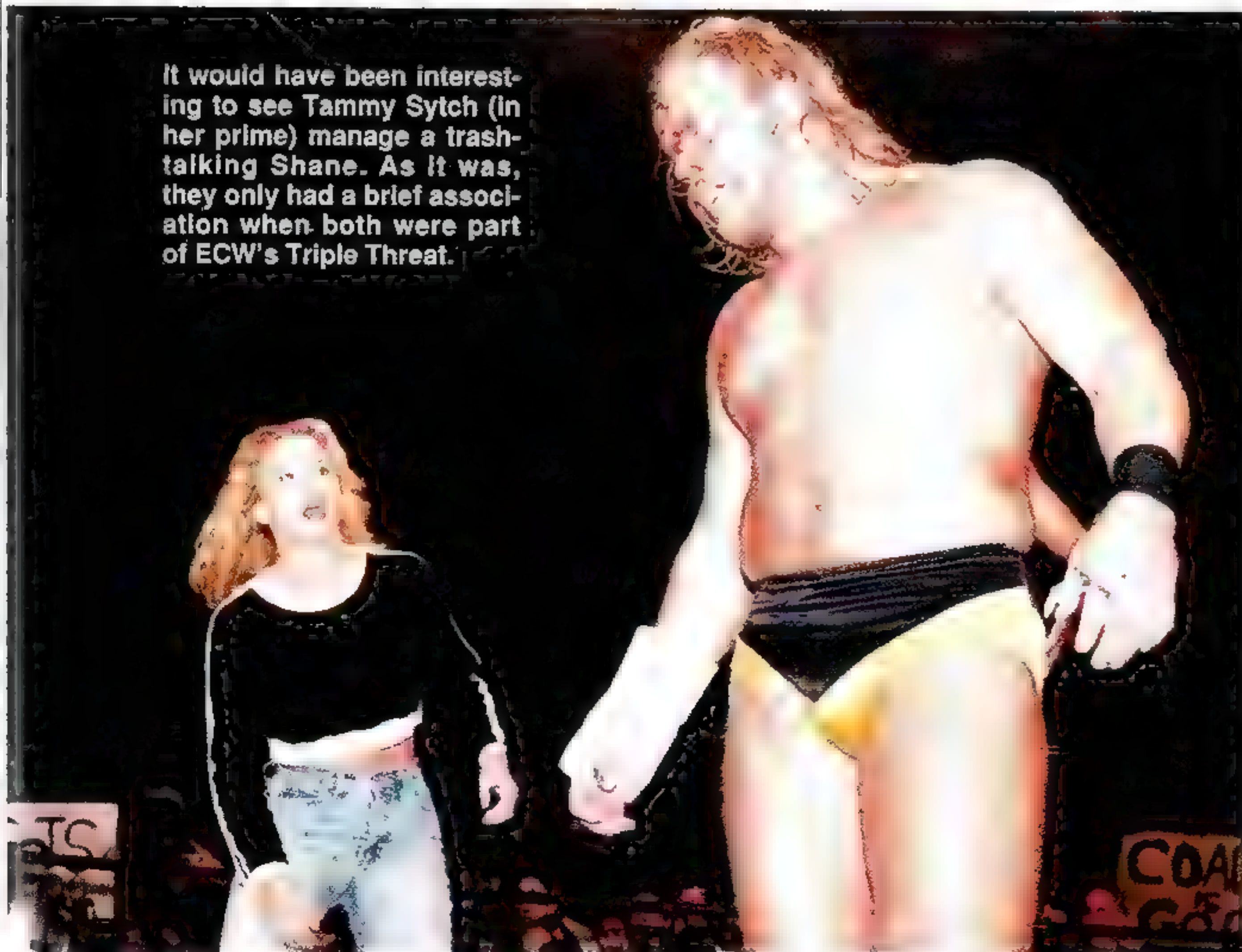
Douglas becomes a better wrestler when he's showing off for a beautiful woman. Once he has the girl, he wants the gold. Generally, he gets both.

"It's pretty damn easy to get up for a match with a woman like Torrie at ringside," Douglas said. "But, you see, whether I have a beautiful woman in my corner or not doesn't make a damn bit of difference. I'm 'The Franchise,' and I'm going to win a lot of gold around here. The women are merely window dressing."

With an attitude like that, it's hard to see what makes Douglas so popular with the women. When asked about Martel, Douglas laughed and said she "served her purpose." Woman? "Could really distract a referee." Missy Hyatt? Nothing but a sly grin and a shrug. Other than Francine, Douglas' former valets have largely disappeared from the wrestling scene. Does Douglas keep in touch with any of them?

"They try to keep in touch with me. That's why I screen my calls," he cracked.

It would have been interesting to see Tammy Sytch (in her prime) manage a trash-talking Shane. As it was, they only had a brief association when both were part of ECW's Triple Threat.



to take a chance with Douglas? We doubt it.

Miss Jones. Miss Jones has some spunk, and we're not just talking about her dancing. When Scott Steiner faced The Cat recently, Midajah got in Miss Jones' face. She responded with a wicked kick to Midajah's head that knocked her to the floor for several minutes. However, Douglas always makes sure he is the center of attention. He wouldn't tolerate her trying to show him up with her dance moves or any other nonsense. A possible, but unlikely pairing.

Tygress. Speaking of spunk ... Tygress is WCW's most versatile woman. She is able to compete with men two or three times her size. Can she be trusted, though? Tygress is close personal friends with The Filthy Animals. Even if Douglas were able to lure her away from Kidman, Rey Misterio Jr., and Konnan, how could he be sure he wasn't a pawn in a Filthy Animals trick? The risk of humiliation would outweigh any advantage Tygress could provide.

Stacy Keibler. Who knows what's going on with the former Miss Hancock? As of this writing, she'd been off WCW TV for months, save for a brief appearance or two. Maybe the whole pregnancy thing is a ruse. Maybe she's going to return with the baby's father. And maybe, just maybe, Shane is the father. At this point, anything could happen.

Pamela Paulshock. We know this one's a long-shot, but we expected Paulshock to get a larger role in WCW after winning that bikini contest several months back. Instead, she was released from her contract. If she returns to WCW, would she content to be a ring announcer again and do backstage interviews (and take heaps of abuse)? If she wants to try her hand at managing, she couldn't ask for a better wrestler than Douglas.

Leia Meow. Douglas is well-acquainted with the former Kimona from their days together in ECW. In fact, it was Douglas who orchestrated Kimona's split from Raven. Leia's Jung Dragons have looked good against Three Count, but they're not exactly making a lot of headway in WCW. With a little more interference, Leia could be a perfect selection. She could pull her old Varsity Club cheerleader outfit out of the mothballs, too.

Major Gunns. Douglas seems to have his eyes set on the U.S. title, at least for the time being. What better way to play mind games with Gen. Rection and Lance Storm than to steal Major Gunns away from both of them? For obvious reasons, Gunn is wildly over with the fans. In this case—much like the alliance with Torrie Wilson—Douglas could parlay the fans' attention into big money matches. Gunns and Douglas would make a perfect pair.



According to Bigelow and other sources within WCW, Douglas is still a highly sought-after commodity among potential female managers. In fact, some have speculated that Douglas would be revealed as the father of Stacy Keibler's baby. Douglas responds with a simple no comment, though he admits he has

Nothing like having a hot blonde in your corner to offer you inspiration. Douglas had one of the hottest blondes in wrestling history, Missy Hyatt, in his corner for a few independent shows in the mid-1990s.

received "several" offers from women looking to be "The Franchise's" next head cheerleader. The more women he goes through, the more attractive he is!


"If the opportunity presented itself, I'd have to consider going back to Shane," Martel admitted. "He may try to sound gruff and macho, but while Shane Douglas looks like a real tiger in the ring, he's really just a big teddy bear. Shane is a discerning kind of man with ever-changing tastes. He knows how to treat a lady and knows what it takes to win. What more could a woman ask for?"

"There's something magnetic about a man who knows what he wants and grabs it with both hands, regardless of the consequences," said one WCW woman under conditions of anonymity. "Maybe some women think they'll succeed where all the other girls failed and finally tame Shane. Personally, I hope he keeps breaking hearts and winning belts. That's what he does best." □



There's no question Raven is a very good hardcore wrestler (as shown by his rivalry with Steve Blackman). It's just that we've seen this kind of stuff from him before. It's enough already.





Raven had every reason to be a sullen, brooding introvert in WCW and ECW. Now that he's in the WWE, he can be bigger than ever. Yet instead of showcasing his vast talent, Raven's only given us more of the same hardcore matches. At this stage of his career, even his fans must be asking ...

WHY IS **RAVEN** AFRAID TO FLY THE COOP?

By Frank Krewda

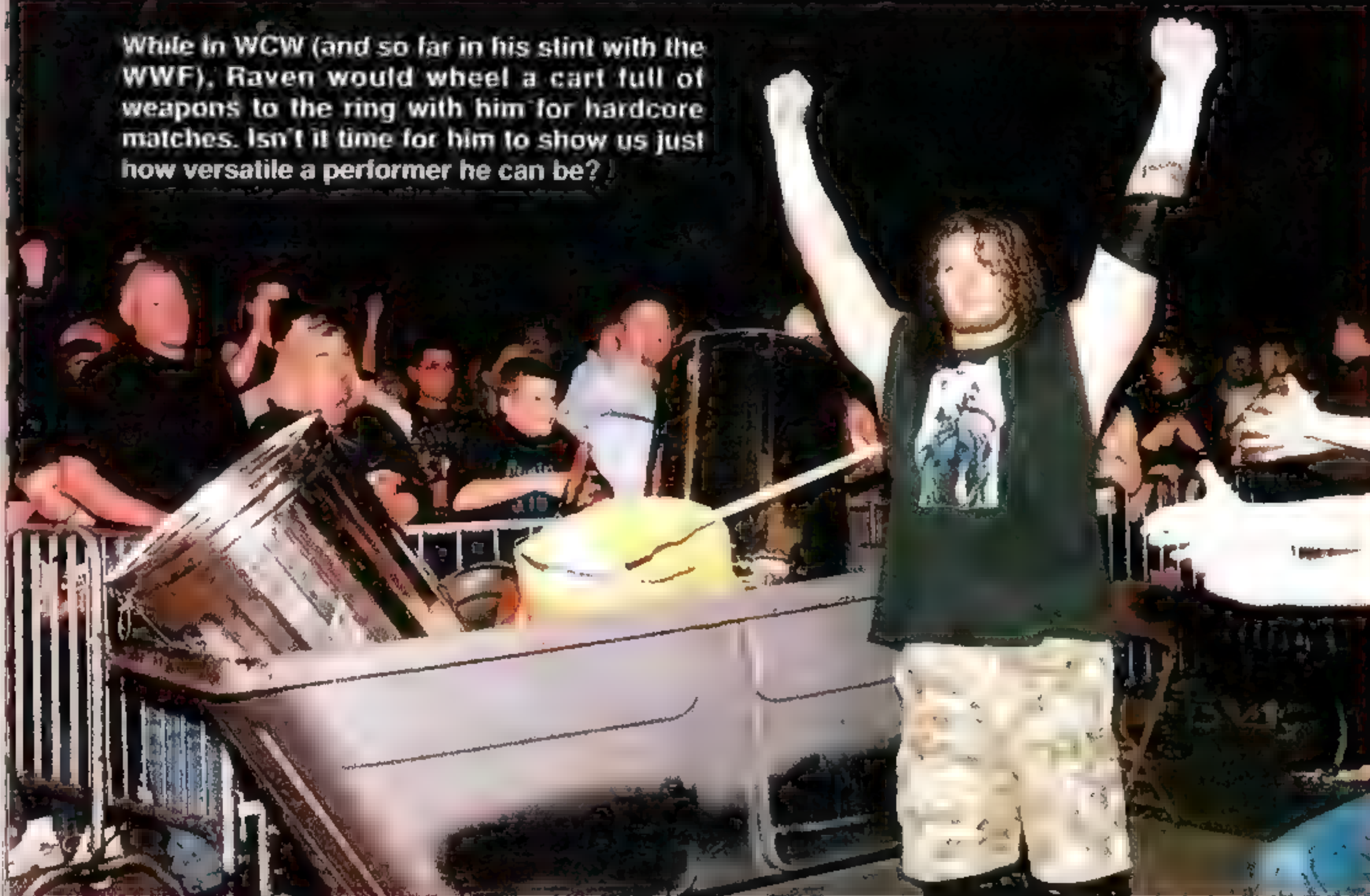
"AWESOME!" THAT'S "Diamond" Dallas Page's opinion of Raven's work. He should know. Page and Raven (and Chris Benoit) worked one of WCW's most intriguing feuds back in 1998. And Page and Raven go way back as friends and rivals.

Yet when you consider the source, there is a certain negativity to Page's endorsement.

Page is an insider, a fellow wrestler. As such, he, Benoit, and countless others in the know recognize Raven's copious wrestling and speaking skills. But if you mention Raven's name to most fans, they'd probably pigeonhole him as the scorned outcast. Even worse, they'd probably classify him as a chair-swinging hardcore freak.

Whether he's remembered as the guy who used to start each match slumped in the corner of the ring or as the dude who took that epic chair shot from Tommy Dreamer while handcuffed to a steel cage, Raven isn't perceived by many as the great talent he truly is.

While in WCW (and so far in his stint with the WWF), Raven would wheel a cart full of weapons to the ring with him for hardcore matches. Isn't it time for him to show us just how versatile a performer he can be?



Granted, Raven was a cult hero in ECW for years. And even in WCW, his prematch ritual of demanding that his matches be wrestled under "Raven's rules" won him pockets of fan support. It just seems that Raven is capable of so much more, especially now that he's competing in the WWF.

That's why anyone with an eye for talent was expecting something of a fresh start from him when he joined the WWF. To the dismay and puzzlement of many, that new beginning hasn't materialized yet.

At press time, Raven was firmly entrenched in more hardcore warfare, this time with Steve Blackman and Hardcore Holly. Sure, he's risen to the top of that field by winning the WWF hardcore championship, but shouldn't Raven be chasing Kurt Angle, Triple-H, The Rock, and Steve Austin for the World title, or at least pursuing I-C gold? Shouldn't he be riling Vince McMahon with his bitter contempt for authority or showing off his dry wit? Shouldn't Raven be casting his spell over Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley, Lita, and/or Trish Status?

"Hey, that cat belongs at the top of any card, Jack," Page told INSIDE WRESTLING. "I'm telling you, the guy's full of great ideas. Always was."

Well, if Raven's as tuned in to the sport as Page claims, it's a wonder why the notion of cutting his hair and leaving the garbage can backstage hasn't dawned on him yet. After all, it was no secret that his second stint in ECW was a warmup for his eventual move to the WWF—a move that most considered a huge step up.

"Of all the transplants in the WWF, Raven's been

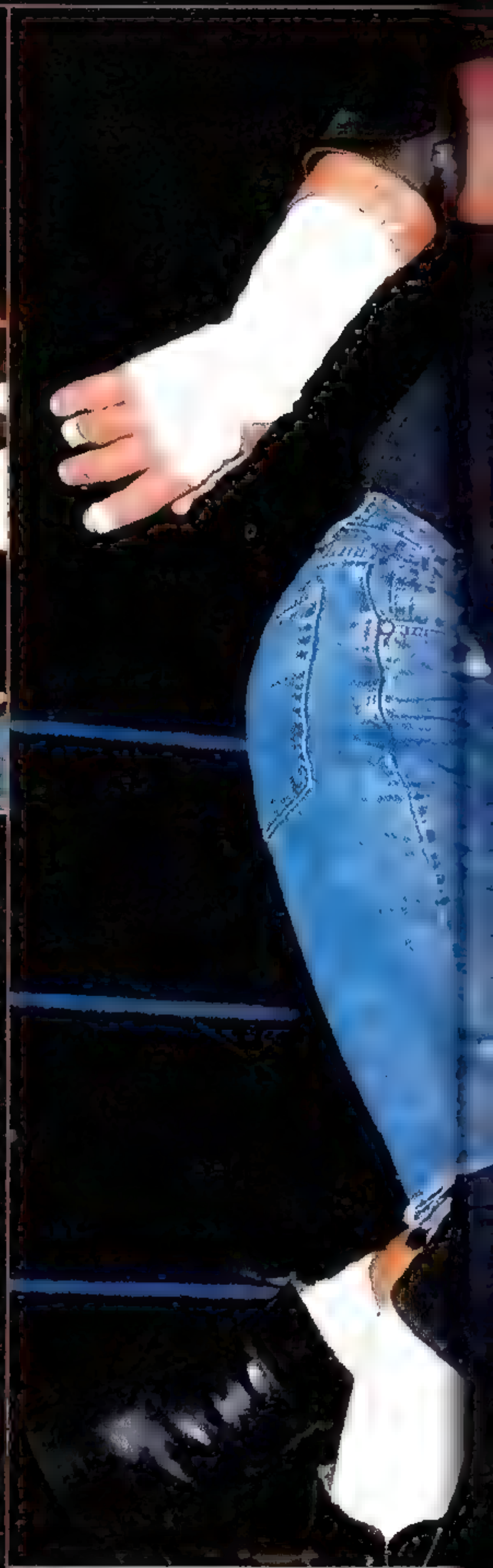
the most overlooked," said Jerry Lawler, who befriended Raven during his 1996 feud with Tommy Dreamer, then battled him for a few months this fall. "But he likes it that way. Raven has as much potential as anyone to be a full-fledged WWF superstar, but he loves that hardcore stuff. It makes him happy. He loves being unconventional, different. He's a rebel."

The rebel in Raven may have served him well in WCW, where he was different. Or in ECW, where it fed into his image as an unscrupulous scamp. But the stakes are higher now that Raven's in the world's premiere wrestling organization. There is more to be gained by "playing the game"—namely unprecedented popularity and glory.

Unfortunately, those very enticements cause Raven to dig in his heels that much deeper.

"Popularity, it's a facade," Raven groaned. "Personal glory? Facade. Anyone who knows me knows that my wrestling was never about popularity or glory or money. I don't know what it's all about, but it sure as hell isn't about those things."

Perhaps Raven's refusal to fly the hardcore





Raven did have a promising start in the WWF this time around. A feud with Jerry Lawler (inset) had potential, but soon he was battling fellow ECW veteran Tazz (below) and resorting to the use of weaponry again.



Raven was interesting when he was clashing with men like Scotty Riggs in WCW ... and later recruiting them for his Flock. He was even more interesting when he got to show off his sense of humor.



coop wouldn't be as troubling if he had less to offer. His feuds with Page, and more recently with occasional tag team partner Tazz, prove he's more than a capable wrestler. And his brief role as Hardcore Hak's spoiled pal in WCW demonstrated that he can be a flat-out riot when he's handed the stick. All the spoils are there for the taking. Sadly, though, success seems as foreign to Raven as a shower and a shave.

"I've never changed for anybody," Raven

reminded us. "I've had the same look, the same approach for years. I'm not about to change now. For what? A few cheers? A few bucks? I wrestle the way I do because I love it. I've tried all the other gimmicks. But this is me. This is Raven."

Back in the mid-'70s, aging rocker Neil Young was sued by his own record company for making "deliberately uncommercial" records. It seems Raven's hell-bent on following the enigmatic musician's example in the ring.

Unlike Young, Raven doesn't have as much time to recoup the losses such stubbornness brings. A wrestler's window of opportunity closes much faster than a musician's. Then again, Raven just might enjoy having the window crash on his head. □

one on one

The telephone wires sizzle each month, as two top wrestlers voice their rage and hostility toward each other. Here's the unedited transcript of their conversation, your chance to feel the raw emotion that results when two antagonists face off ... One On One

ON PAPER, IT probably looked like a good idea. The system of checks and balances between the offices of WCW CEO and commissioner were put in place to prevent one man from taking hold of too much executive power and manipulating the politics of the promotion for his own gain. It seemed like a solid balance—that is, until Ric Flair and Mike Sanders finagled their way into power.

It seems neither Flair nor Sanders can make a decision without the other one trying to undermine his authority. When Flair ruled that only licensed managers would be allowed at ringside during the Mayhem pay-per-view, Sanders sent Doug Dellinger's ringside security team home for the night and replaced them with The Natural Born Thrillers, sidestepping Flair's decree. When Flair forced the Thrillers to face Kevin Nash and Dallas Page, Sanders screwed with The Insiders' transportation plans so they couldn't arrive at the arena on time. And whenever it seems like Sanders and the Thrillers are getting the upper hand, Flair throws a swerve and makes matches on the fly, often putting one of Sanders' men in the ring against Goldberg. It's a chess match that can affect almost anyone in WCW.

While Flair outranks Sanders, it's hard to tell where the "Nature Boy's" jurisdiction ends and where Sanders' begins. Sanders has vowed to do everything in his power to undermine Flair's authority and take his job as CEO. For the most part, Flair has dealt with Sanders' shenanigans, but the balance of power could shift at any time.

Neither Flair nor Sanders has ever shied away from spouting off, so it only seemed natural to offer them the chance to air their thoughts here ... "One On One."



"Flair, I don't care if you give us lip service or not, as long as the good-ol'-boy network remains in effect in WCW, then we're going to fight the power—in the ring and out of it."

—Mike Sanders

RIC FLAIR: Mr. Commissioner! I'm glad to hear you're alive and well. By now I would have thought Nash and Page would have sent you into an early retirement.

MIKE SANDERS: I'm real sorry to disappoint you, "Naitch." Myself, Sean O'Haire, Chuck Palumbo, Mark Jindrak, Reno, and Shawn Stasiak are all rested and ready to rumble. Now if we could just get some fair matches against your sacred cows, we could get on with the business of being the hottest properties in this industry. That's exactly what we are.

RF: Let me break out my violin, Mike. I'm really starting to get tired of you and your persecution complex. The whole thing has gotten old in a hurry, brother. I'd love to see either Jindrak and O'Haire or The Perfect Event go two-on-two with The Insiders. And I'd love to see you and Ernest Miller settle the score man-to-man, once and for all. But that's not the way you guys operate. I can't remember the last time I saw any of the Thrillers wrestle without outside interference, and that just isn't the way things are done in WCW.

MS: So says the founder of The Four Horsemen.

RF: You've got a lot of roads to travel before your band of greenhorns can even begin to compare themselves



"You boys are the young studs riding into town, demanding to be taken seriously. But as far as I see, you still haven't outdrawn the gunslingers. And you won't be the superstars you think you are until you do."

—Ric Flair

to the Horsemen, kid. Ole Anderson, Arn Anderson, Tully Blanchard—hell, even Paul Roma—we've all been retired for years, but any one of us would be able to beat you boys on your best day, and that is the Gospel truth. You'll never get one over on Ric Flair, you know. Just when you think you've outsmarted me, I change the rules of the game.

MS: You know, with the way things are run around here, I don't doubt any of what you're saying. First you'd have one of us wrestle Goldberg, then you'd kick the rest of the Thrillers out of the building. Then you'd make yourself the special referee and Arn Anderson the timekeeper and Paul Roma or maybe even Ole Anderson the ring announcer. All the fans would cheer, despite all the obstacles you put in our way, and management would turn a blind eye. The era of the dinosaurs has to end in WCW.

RF: I'm so sick of hearing all you punks complaining that the old men are running the show. For God's sake, do something about it! This is wrestling. Go out and beat somebody. Show me what you got for once. If you put half the amount of time training that you do bitching and moaning about how you're getting screwed all the time or about why this isn't fair or that isn't right, maybe The

Natural Born Thrillers would have some titles.

MS: It's awfully hard to win titles when you don't get the shots you deserve. Look at Page. He's been on the sidelines for months. He comes back, cuts some syrupy promo on *Nitro*, gets into a few scrums with a bunch of geeks from *Battle Dome*, and right away, him and Kevin Nash are top contenders to The Perfect Event's tag title? What the hell is the deal with that? Whatever happened to working your way up the ladder? It's obvious that the normal rules just don't apply to your friends, Ric.

RF: You ever watch a Western, Mike? There's always the veteran gunslinger who has whipped everybody's tail over the years. Maybe he slows down a little, but that gray-haired gunslinger is still the man. And it's like I've always said: You've got to beat the man to be the man. You boys are the young studs riding into town, demanding to be taken seriously. But as far as I see, you still haven't outdrawn the gunslingers. And you won't be the superstars you think you are until you do. The sooner you learn that, the sooner me and you will learn to get along. Believe me, you want Ric Flair on your side, pal.

MS: How can you even see through those rose-colored glasses you're wearing? Maybe that's how they settled the score back when you were a boy on the frontier, but that just isn't how it is today. Today it's all about ratings. It's about hardcore. It's about O'Haire's Sean-ton bomb. It's about Shawn "Perfection" Stasiak. We're a new generation of professional wrestlers. The Natural Born Thrillers are the best conditioned athletes in WCW today. We're the most well-rounded wrestling machines in this business—not a pair of ex-bouncers looking for a quick paycheck. Not two-bit James Brown impersonators like The Cat. We're a new breed, and it's about time we got our due respect.

RF: That's your problem, Sanders. Respect isn't something that's handed out; respect is something you earn. How long do you think it took me to earn the respect that I have now? It took a whole lot of years and a whole lot of blood, sweat, and tears. I've seen a lot of men come and go over the years; some are all mouth and some have some real skills. I've got to admit that you and the Thrillers have plenty of talent. Believe it or not, I think you boys are some of the most promising talents I've seen in a long time, and I'd hate to see you guys waste it.

MS: All of that amounts to exactly jack squat. Flair, I don't care if you give us lip service or not, as long as the good-ol'-boy network remains in effect in WCW, then we're going to fight the power—in the ring and out of it. You want to keep pushing all your buddies? You want to keep fanning the flames between me and The Cat? Fine. What we do to them is going to be on your head. Now if you don't mind, I've had about all I can take of your old-school gunslinger crap. I've got matches to make and careers to end.

RF: As long as a pen and your mouth are your greatest weapons, then I've got nothing to fear, Mike, and neither does anybody else. I'll see you Monday night. □

TIMELINE



January 15:

After several months away from the sport, "Diamond" Dallas Page makes his return to wrestling as the manager of The Freebirds, Michael Hayes and Jim Garvin, in Columbus, Georgia.

January 18:

Pro Wrestling Illustrated strips the American Wrestling Association of world title status, citing the promotion's inability to promote cards on a regular basis.

January 19:

Jumbo Tsuruta captures his third All-Japan Triple Crown by defeating Stan Hansen in Matsumoto, Japan. He holds the belt until January 28, 1992, when Hansen beats him.

January 7:

Arn Anderson wins his second NWA TV title by defeating Tom Zenk in Perry, Georgia.

January 11:

Ric Flair captures his eighth NWA World heavyweight title, tying him with Harley Race for the record number of title wins, by beating Sting in East Rutherford, New Jersey. He is later recognized as the first-ever WCW World champion because of this victory.

January 19:

Sgt. Slaughter captures his first-ever WWF World heavyweight title by beating The Ultimate Warrior in the main event of the Royal Rumble pay-per-view.

January 25:

Tag Team, a TV pilot starring Roddy Piper and Jesse Ventura, is broadcast on ABC. The network pre-empts the series *Twin Peaks* to present the pilot, which was originally produced for inclusion on the 1990 fall schedule.



In each issue, INSIDE WRESTLING will journey back in time to look at how the major events of one particular year rocked the wrestling world

March 4:

Tatsumi Fujinami recaptures the IWGP heavyweight title from Big Van Vader, to whom he lost it earlier in the year.

March 21:

IWGP heavyweight champion Tatsumi Fujinami pins NWA heavyweight champion Ric Flair in Tokyo. Fujinami is recognized as the NWA champion in Japan, while in the U.S., WCW disputes the finish.

May 13:

Long-time prelim wrestler Norio Honaga pulls off one of the greatest upsets in Japanese wrestling history by defeating Jushin Liger in a tournament final for the vacant IWGP junior heavyweight title.

March 9:

Rick and Scott Steiner defeat Jim Garvin and Michael Hayes to win their second NWA World tag team title.

March 11:

Sensational Sherri announces her new role as manager of Ted DiBiase in Pensacola, Florida.

March 24:

Hulk Hogan defeats WWF World heavyweight champion Sgt. Slaughter at WrestleMania VII to win the title. At the same PPV, The Nasty Boys defeat WWF World tag team champs The Hart Foundation to win their first WWF tag title.



TIMELINE



June 3:
Steve Austin captures his first WCW singles title by defeating TV champ Bobby Eaton in Birmingham, Alabama.

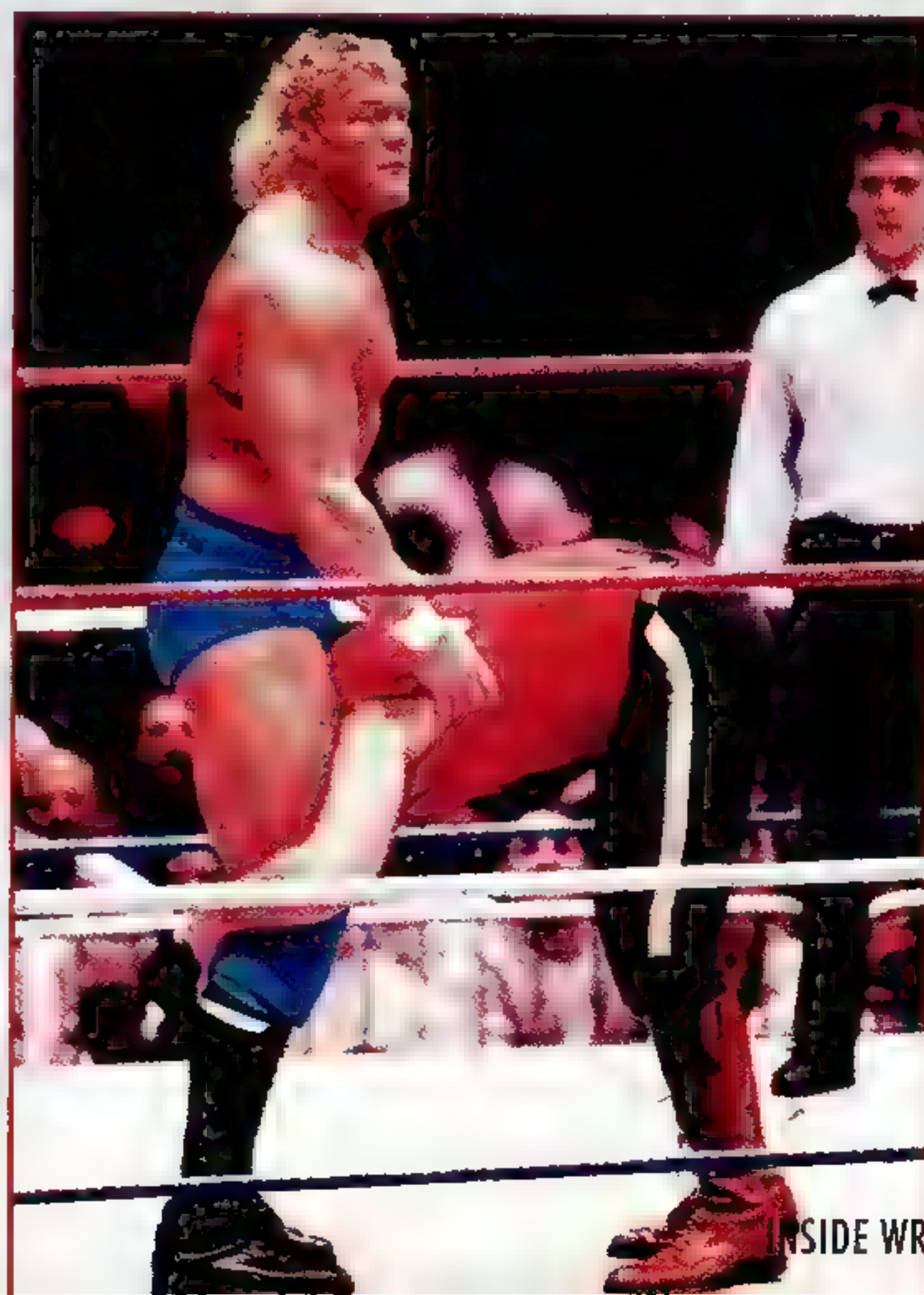
June 5:
Tasmaniac (Tazz) captures the IWCCW light heavyweight title from Ray Odyssey in Brooklyn, New York.

June 9:
The UWF's first pay-per-view, Beach Brawl, airs from Palmetto, Florida. In the main event, Steve Williams pins Bam Bam Bigelow to become the first UWF heavyweight champion.

May 19:
Ric Flair defeats IWGP and NWA heavyweight champion Tatsumi Fujinami to recapture the NWA title in St. Petersburg, Florida. Also on the card, Bobby Eaton defeats WCW TV champ Arn Anderson to win the title.

May 28:
Sid Vicious makes his WWF debut by attacking The Mountie in Tucson, Arizona.

June 8:
AWA and PWA wrestler Derrick Dukes squares off against former New York Jets defensive end Mark Gastineau in Salem, Virginia, in Gastineau's pro boxing debut. Dukes, 2-1 as a boxer coming into the bout, is kayoed by Gastineau in the first round. He later admits to having taken a dive.



1991



June 12:

Scott Steiner's left biceps tendon is torn from the bone when he is attacked by Dick Slater and Dick Murdoch following a successful defense of the Steiners' WCW World tag team title against Hiroshi Hase and Masa Chono at Clash of the Champions XV.

July 2:

NWA/WCW World champion Ric Flair quits/is fired by WCW.

July 16:

WWF head Vince McMahon announces that WWF stars will undergo mandatory testing for anabolic steroids as part of the company's anti-drug policy.

June 27:

Dr. George T. Zahorian, who formerly served as a ringside physician at WWF events in Pennsylvania, is convicted on 12 of 14 counts of selling anabolic steroids to four pro wrestlers and a weightlifter in a trial held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He is subsequently sentenced to three years in prison.

June 28:

The Global Wrestling Federation makes its debut in Dallas, Texas.

July 14:

Lex Luger defeats Barry Windham to win the vacant WCW World heavyweight title. Ric Flair had been stripped of the title on July 1 after he could not come to a contractual agreement with WCW. Luger and Windham were deemed the top contenders to the title.



TIMELINE



July 16:

WWF World heavyweight champion Hulk Hogan, while appearing on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, states, "... I'm not a steroid abuser, and I do not use steroids." Hogan would contradict those statements at Vince McMahon's 1994 trial.

August 11:

Masahiro Chono wins New Japan's first Grade One (G1) tournament by beating The Great Muta (Keiji Muto) in the finals in Tokyo.

August 25:

Legendary woman wrestler Vivian Vachon and her daughter, Julie, are killed in a head-on automobile collision in Montreal; Vivian was 40.

August 3:

Cactus Jack and Eddie Gilbert wrestle a best-of-three-falls series in Philadelphia. The first match is a falls-count-anywhere bout, the second is a stretcher match, and the third is a cage match.

August 25:

Sting defeats Steve Austin in a tournament final to win the vacant WCW U.S. title.

August 26:

Jake Roberts and The Undertaker crash the reception of Randy Savage and Miss Elizabeth after the conclusion of the SummerSlam pay-per-view, instigating a feud that would last until early-December. At the same PPV, Bret Hart defeats I-C champion Curt Hennig to win his first WWF singles title.



1991



September 5:

Arn Anderson and Larry Zbyszko defeat Bill Kazmaier and Rick Steiner in a tournament final to win the vacant WCW World tag team title. The title had been stripped from the Steiners due to Scott's biceps injury.

September 12:

Chris Von Erich dies of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in Edom, Texas, at the age of 21.

October 23:

Ric Flair defeats WWF World champion Hulk Hogan by countout in their first-ever match.

September 8:

The NWA Board strips Ric Flair of recognition as NWA champion.

September 10:

Ric Flair wrestles his first WWF bout, forcing Jim Powers to submit to the figure-four leglock in Cornwall, Ontario.

October 20:

Mil Mascaras is unmasked during a tag team match in Naucalpan, Mexico. During the third fall of a bout pitting Mascaras and Dos Caras against Fishman and El Canek, Canek yanks off Mascaras' mask.



INSIDE WRESTLING



65

TIME **LINE**



October 31:

Gene Anderson, brother and Minnesota Wrecking Crew tag team partner of Ole Anderson, dies of a heart attack while attending a law enforcement training class in Huntersville, North Carolina; he was 58.

November 19:

Dustin Rhodes and Rick Steamboat defeat WCW World tag team champs Arn Anderson and Larry Zbyszko in Savannah, Georgia, to win the title. On the same card, Rick Rude defeats U.S. champion Sting to win the title.

November 27:

The Undertaker, managed by Paul Bearer, defeats WWF World champion Hulk Hogan to win his first-ever WWF World title.

October 27:

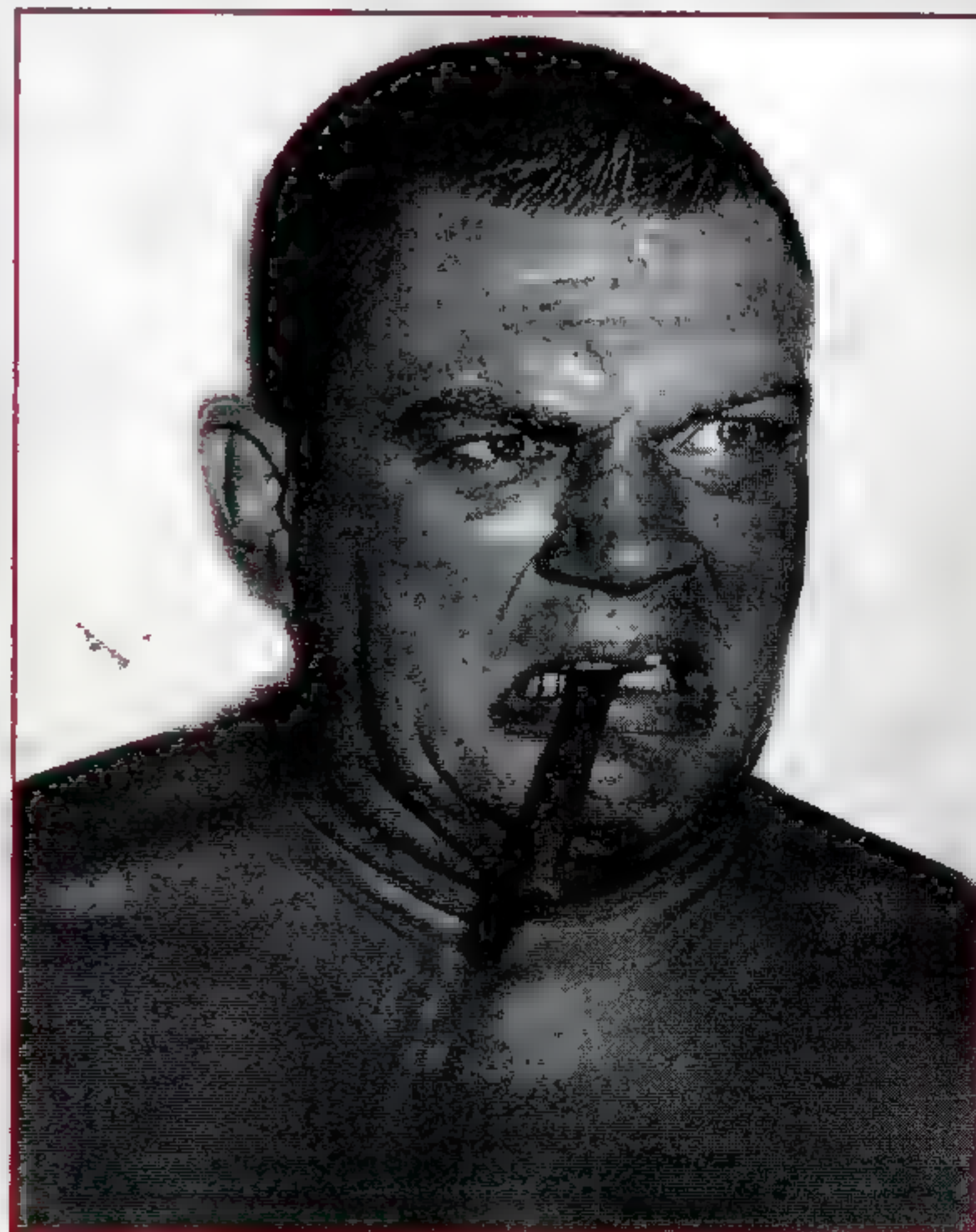
Brian Pillman becomes WCW's first-ever light heavyweight champion by defeating Richard Morton in a tournament final for the newly created division in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

November 10:

Dick Afflis, known professionally as Dick the Bruiser, dies while lifting weights at his vacation home near Tampa; he was 62.

November 20:

Disco makes his professional wrestling debut.





1991

December 3:

Hulk Hogan defeats WWF World champion The Undertaker to win his fourth WWF World title. But because of outside interference by Ric Flair and Paul Bearer, WWF President Jack Tunney declares the title vacant one day later, with a new champion to be determined at the Royal Rumble.

December 27:

Veteran AWA and WWA star Wilbur Snyder dies of heart failure at Broward County Hospital in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; he was 62.

December 6:

Dynamite Kid, one-half of The British Bulldogs tag team with Davey Boy Smith, announces his retirement from the ring during a ceremony in Budokan, Japan.

December 25:

Jushin Liger defeats WCW light heavyweight champion Brian Pillman to win the title in Atlanta, Georgia.

December 28:

Portland Wrestling, which had aired in the state of Oregon for 38 years, airs its final episode. Not long after, the famed Pacific Northwest territory closes its doors for the final time.



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Sincerely Yours

(Continued from page 5)



Has "The One" Billy Gunn been an underachiever? Perry Saturn doesn't think so. But reader Barry Cassidy does. He compares Gunn's career to that of Lex Luger.

touchdown spinnerooni!"

My prediction for what we'll all hear that very same evening over on TNT during *WCW Monday Nitro*: "Watching Scott Steiner assail Bill Goldberg is kinda like watching Nietzsche give a discourse on the better points of chaos theory—painful as hell, but oddly entertaining."

KASPER KEIL
Westmore, VT

THAT DREADED "U" WORD

You guys hit the nail right on the head with your feature story on Billy Gunn from the March 2001 issue ("Butt Seriously, Billy ... Don't Let This Opportunity Fall Through The Cracks!")

For years, Lex Luger was wres-

ting's ultimate underachiever. Luger had all the physical tools to win major titles, but he just didn't do it all that often. Well, Billy Gunn is the Lex Luger for the new millennium.

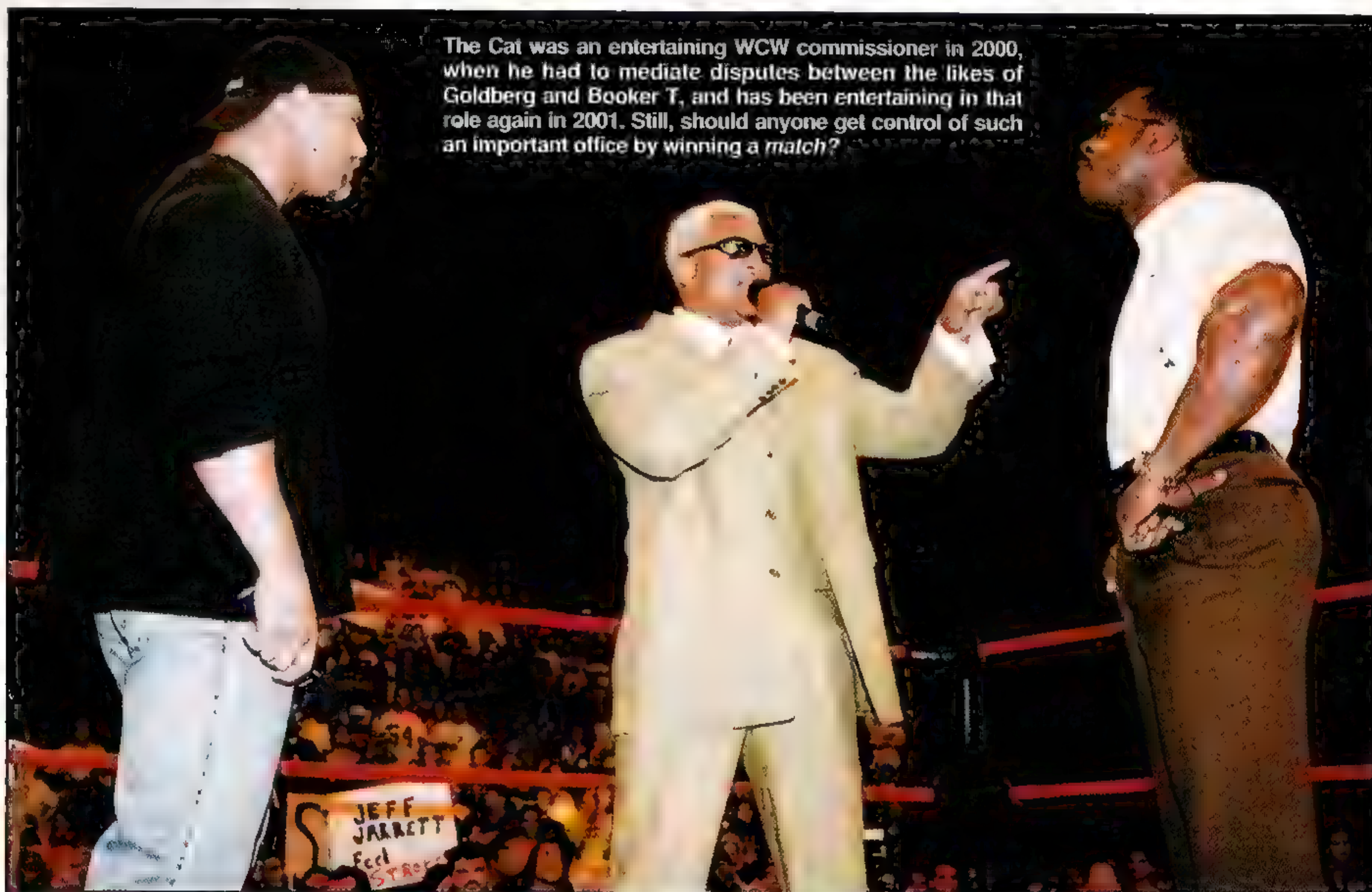
Jim Ross is always telling us how Gunn is the best pure athlete in the federation. Well, until Gunn proves that with a lengthy Intercontinental title run or a decisive victory over a member of the WWF's top tier, I just can't believe it.

Sure, Billy Gunn seems to possess all the physical tools necessary to become a huge star in the sport—but he also can't win that one big match. Until he does, he'll always be an underachiever.

BARRY CASSIDY
Ghent, PA □

On The Road

(Continued from page 10)



The Cat was an entertaining WCW commissioner in 2000, when he had to mediate disputes between the likes of Goldberg and Booker T, and has been entertaining in that role again in 2001. Still, should anyone get control of such an important office by winning a match?

part in the outcome? Has wrestling become one big gimmick?

You know, the way things are going, a straight one-on-one wrestling match with no stipulations and real referees is going to seem like a gimmick. Maybe that's the direction in which the sport is heading. If so, great. What I wouldn't give for Greg Gagne vs. Curt Hennig.

Did I really just say that?

I couldn't have.

Every time I see Terry Funk wrestle, I flinch. The man is 56 years old and still wrestling in hardcore matches?! Really scary.

The eighth match on the card was a first-blood match pitting Shane Douglas against Gen. Rection for the U.S. title. The amazing thing about this match is that the first guy who bled really lost. That's in stark contrast to the usual WCW first-blood match, in which first and maybe second blood is ignored, until the referee

finally decides to acknowledge the presence of blood. Douglas won this bout (and the title) when he used a chain to bust open Rection.

Then came Michael Buffer. These days, Michael Buffer means nothing. He used to mean something when he only showed up for big boxing or wrestling heavyweight title matches, but now he shows up so often that seeing Michael Buffer in the ring is no more exciting than seeing Pamela Anderson with her top off. The stipulation of the Lex Luger and Buff Bagwell vs. Goldberg and Dwayne Bruce match was that if either Bruce or Goldberg got pinned or submitted, Goldberg's WCW career was over. Luger pinned Goldberg, which supposedly meant that Goldberg's WCW career was over, which in turns means one of two things:

1. WCW will have to find a way to reinstate Goldberg (calling Eric Bischoff).

2. The WWF is about to get another big-time star (I'm thinking not).

Finally, in the main event, WCW World champion Scott Steiner pinned Sid Vicious in a four-way match that also involved Jeff Jarrett and a mystery man. Ric Flair's mystery man was revealed to be Road Warrior Animal. Unfortunately for WCW, Road Warrior Animal was a big star in the mid- to late-1980s. That was more than a decade ago. And walking out of the Canseco Fieldhouse, I had to wonder, *Do most of these fans even know who Road Warrior Animal is?*

Schiavone said that Sin would start a new era for WCW. Obviously he was referring to the fact that WCW had just been sold and Eric Bischoff had been named president again.

But if Road Warrior Animal signals the start of that new era, that new era is actually 1988. □

Behind The Door

(Continued from page 12)

main event. But the winner of the Royal Rumble is in.

The Royal Rumble is the greatest event in pro wrestling because it has catapulted more wrestlers to greatness than any other event in pro wrestling. I'm talking about Bret Hart, Kevin Nash (then Diesel), and so many others, all of whom got their first big singles lift in the Rumble. WrestleMania is definitely the Super Bowl of wrestling, but the Royal Rumble is like the NFC or AFC Championship Game. It's what gets you there. Wanna know who's hot in wrestling? Watch the Rumble.

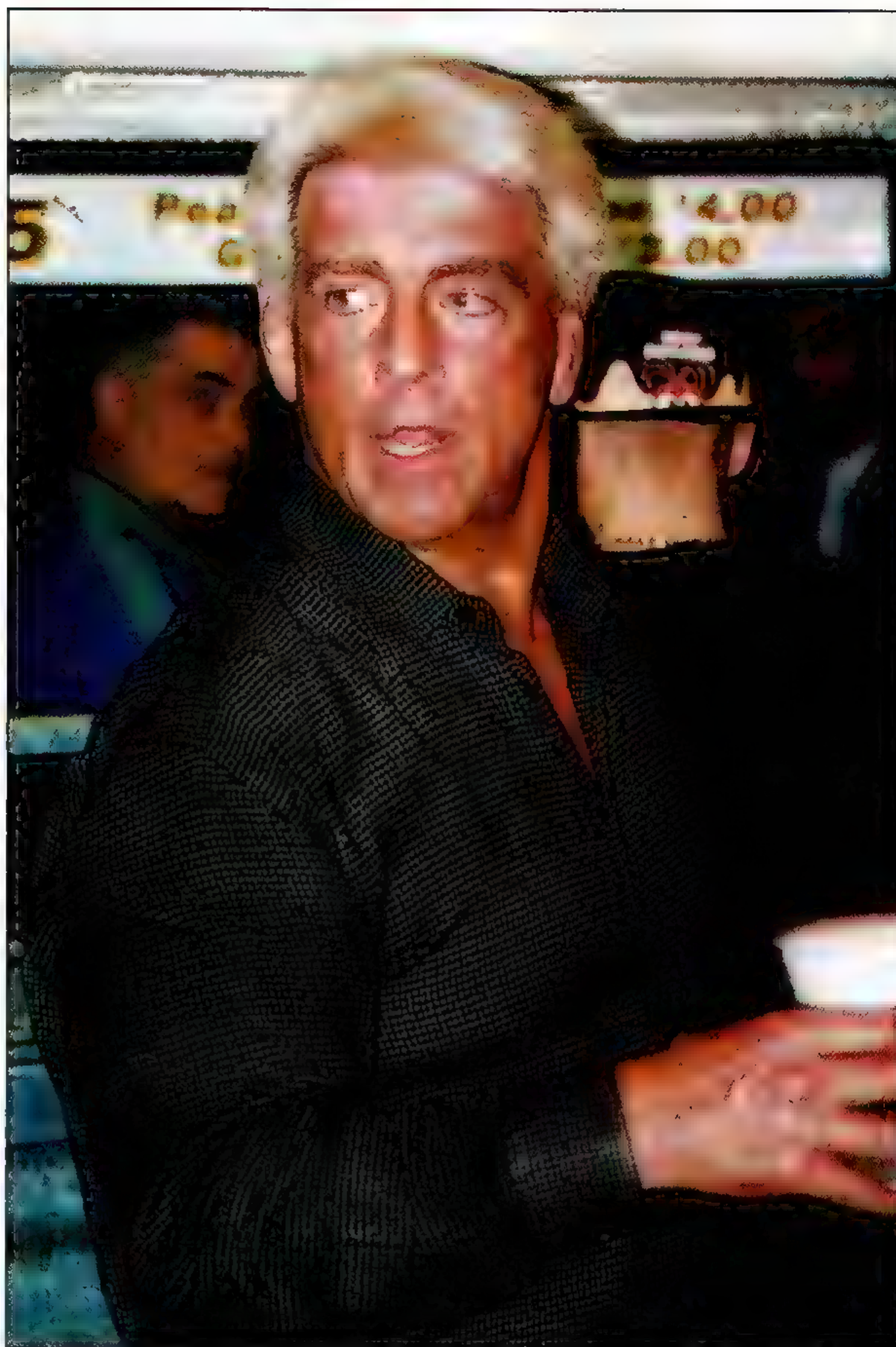
Remember that next January when you're deciding whether to shell out your pay-per-view dollars.

Ric Flair welcomes wrestlers and fans to the new WCW. This happened on *Nitro*. I laughed when I heard him say it. Then I switched to another channel. I saw Guy Lombardo conducting his orchestra. I realized right away that Guy Lombardo has been dead for years, and that what I was watching was a rerun. A thought came to mind: Unless Eric Bischoff really has some new and brilliant ideas, WCW's best hopes are reruns. WCW should rerun the first six months of the New World Order and hope that the WWF decides to air reruns from the first few years of the 1990s.

But seriously, folks, when I see Ric Flair, I think here's a guy who's one of the all-time best wrestlers and talkers of all-time. But when is this guy going to do or say something new? And how much longer can his veins keep popping out of his head before his veins finally just literally pop out of his head?

When Vince McMahon sees Ric Flair on *Nitro*, he must think, *I can beat that. No offense to Flair, but if that's the best they can offer and they're not featuring hot new stars, we can beat that every Monday night for the rest of the century.*

It is scary when Stephanie Mc-



Dave Rosenbaum believes Ric Flair's time as a box office draw are over. He compares Flair's recent actions to those of his competitors in the WWF, namely Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley, and says Flair comes up short.

Mahon is a more compelling television personality than Ric Flair. It is very obvious that Vince McMahon's family is more interesting than Ric Flair's family. I am pretty convinced that Jerry Lawler's family is more interesting than Ric Flair's family. Maybe if Flair were to be surrounded with

some new talent (Bischoff has, of course, said that developing new stars is a top priority—we'll see about that), I would find him more interesting. It's not like he isn't trying out there.

I would just hate to see my last memories of Ric Flair in a wrestling ring turn out to be negative ones. □

The Insider

(Continued from page 14)

corner of your bedroom. Sure, Wal-Mart might have quite a collection from which to choose, but why buy one when you can buy three? That would be a new, somewhat clean shirt for each time you change your clothes this month. **YA COULD WEAR DA CLEAN ONE WHEN YA TAKE YA MOM TA DA MONSTER TRUCK RALLY FOR HER BIRTHDAY.** But it's not just T-shirt sales that are slowing. The toy industry took a hit this past year, too. The problem is that you people aren't buying enough wrestling dolls. The next time you're at your local mall—**DAT'S DA PLACE WHERE THEY SELL THINGS IN THEM FANCY DEPARTMENT STORES**—stop by the toy store and pick up a few action figures. It doesn't matter which ones—just grab. And buy a ring, too. They'll need a place to "sports entertain" once they're in your mobile home.

While you may think these recession woes are limited to The Big One And Its Two Closest Competitors, guess again. Your local independent promotion isn't missing out on all of this depressing fun; it's getting hit just as hard. First, check to see if the promotion is still in business. Just call the promotion's hotline or go to its Web site. If it is, go to a show. You'll probably notice that the venue is smaller, the talent level has dropped, and that there are more guys on the card than in the audience. Part of this is the fault of TBOAITCC, since they have taken most of the good tal-

ent and hid it in Godforsaken places like Memphis and Georgia. **DAT'S WHERE DA GOOD RASSLERS GONE.** Now, you're stuck with the best of the rest.

There is one similar ingredient in each of these factors that is glaringly obvious: the fans. **YEP, YOU.** This whole recession thing is all your fault. If it wasn't for your budget tightening or whatever the hell you're doing with your money, we'd all be happier. Because of you, Too Cool and The Hardy



A few years ago, you would have jumped at the chance to buy Tammy Sytch and Chris Candido merchandise. Now you'll find it in bargain bins ... if you find it at all. You should be ashamed of yourselves for not doing (and buying) more to support this business.

Boyz can't afford to buy proper ring attire. Because of you, Chris Candido's ECW figurine sits in a "two-dollars-or-under" bargain bin—right next to Tammy "Sunny" Sytch's last WWF doll. "Because of you, Rena "Don't Call Me Sable" Mero can't find an acting job to save her career. And because of you, Major Gunns can't buy a properly fitting top to cover her chilled body.

In other words, **THANX FOR NUTHIN.** □

On Assignment

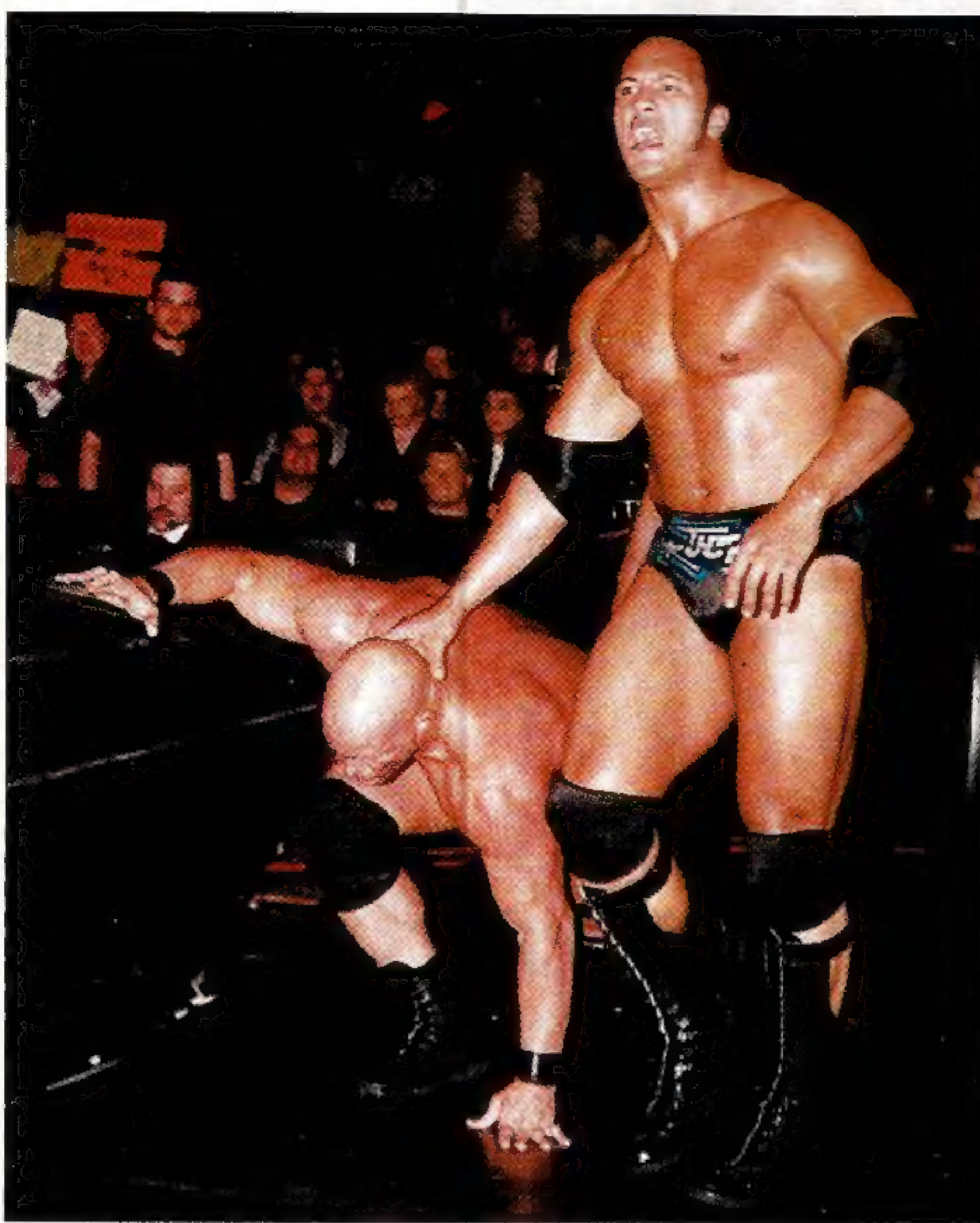
(Continued from page 16)

mate in which the federation sells the good vs. evil concept, rather than pushing one superhero. Ric Flair vs. Dusty Rhodes in the 1980s would be an example. Flair was the NWA champ 90 percent of the time, but Rhodes seemed to possess superior skills and enjoy taking the moral high ground. Ditto for the AWA's Nick Bockwinkel and Verne Gagne in the 1970s.

The Rock and Steve Austin are different from all those examples. They are twin pillars of popularity. Whether they are judged by crowd reaction, merchandising sales, or in-ring dominance, Rock and Austin are as close to a tie as I've ever seen. Is it possible for these men to share the spotlight, or are they determined to squeeze each other out?

Before Austin's spinal injury drove him out of the game in late-1999, the conventional wisdom was that Austin would turn heel on The Rock, and they would finally meet again at WrestleMania 2000. Austin seemed to be the natural heel because it was "Stone-Cold" who made such an effective villain that the antihero came to dominate the industry. Besides, it had been almost four years since Austin had been a true bad guy. He needed to change things up.

That expected turn didn't take place when Austin returned to the WWF in September. Austin sought revenge for being run over at the previous year's Survivor Series, and The Rock eventually lost the WWF World title to Kurt Angle in October. That curbed the Rock-Austin war, at least temporarily.



When last Rock and Austin feuded, Rock was the clear-cut heel, so it seemed logical that the next time they feuded, roles would be reversed. Then again, a Rock heel turn at this point would be more shocking.

Throughout the fall, there were rumblings that the people's champion might turn heel. The reasoning was the WWF wanted Austin to have another healthy run as a good guy in order to sell pay-per-views and merchandise. Austin, who cites merchandising sales as a major part of his income, wouldn't dare risk anything that would make him unpopular. Also, Austin has finally accepted his heroic persona and doesn't want to turn his back on the fans.

The Rock's own words gave credence to this scenario. In his autobiography, *The Rock Says*, he discusses how much he loved being a heel, and how he prefers it to being a fan favorite. The Rock is young enough to turn and then become a

hero again long before he retires.

As we enter 2001 and get closer to WrestleMania XVII, neither man has blinked. Angle has squeaked by both of them. I still think WrestleMania will feature a main event of Rock vs. Austin for the World title, although the confrontation might be watered down to a three-way or four-way event to put Angle and/or Triple-H into the mix.

If Rock or Austin makes that career-altering decision to turn heel, there are several factors to consider. Austin's foul mouth and unrelenting aggressiveness would make him an ideal heel. Aligning himself with Vince McMahon or committing a particularly heinous act against The Rock might be enough to earn him some evil heat. Those might be the only ways, actually.

Then again, The Rock turning heel might be more effective. It would be more of a surprise, and The Rock turning bad would be much more of a betrayal. After all, WWF fans have transformed The Rock into one of the most recognizable men in the world. How could he snub that outpouring of support by turning against the fans? The ungratefulness demonstrated by a Rock heel turn would make a lot of fans angry.

I'm betting on a Rock-Austin war. I don't really want to see it, because I think the world needs all of the heroes it can get. It would be tragic to see Rock or Austin retreat to the dark side. But it's bound to happen. Their egos are too huge, and the stakes are much too high. □

INSIDE WRESTLING'S official ratings

TOP 15

- 1—**SCOTT STEINER**
(6) WCW World champion
- 2—**KURT ANGLE**
(3) WWF World champion
- 3—**STEVE AUSTIN**
(-) No. 2 contender: WWF World title

- 4—**GENICHIRO TENRYU**
(2) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
- 5—**KENSUKE SASAKI**
(15) IWGP heavyweight champion
- 6—**RHINO**
(8) ECW World champion
- 7—**JEFF JARRETT**
(-) No. 2 contender: WCW World title

- 8—**TRIPLE-H**
(11) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 9—**THE ROCK**
(5) No. 4 contender: WWF World title
- 10—**SHANE DOUGLAS**
(-) WCW U.S. champion
- 11—**KANE**
(-) No. 5 contender: WWF World title

- 12—**CHRIS BENOIT**
(-) No. 6 contender: WWF World title
- 13—**THE SANDMAN**
(-) No. 1 contender: ECW World title
- 14—**CHRIS JERICO**
(14) WWF Intercontinental champion
- 15—**MIKE RAPADA**
(-) NWA heavyweight champion

WCW

- 1—**SCOTT STEINER**
(3) 275, Detroit, MI
- 2—**SHANE DOUGLAS**
(-) 255, Pittsburgh, PA
- 3—**JEFF JARRETT**
(7) 230, Nashville, TN

- 4—**GEN. RECTION**
(4) 310, Titusville, FL
- 5—**KEVIN NASH**
(9) 356, Detroit, MI
- 6—**CHAVO GUERRERO JR.**
(-) 210, El Paso, TX
- 7—**THE CAT**
(12) 235, Atlanta, GA

- 8—**LANCE STORM**
(2) 231, Calgary, Alberta
- 9—**LEX LUGER**
(13) 275, Chicago, IL
- 10—**MIKE AWESOME**
(8) 285, Tampa, FL
- 11—**BILL GOLDBERG**
(5) 283, Tulsa, OK

- 12—**CROWBAR**
(10) 232, Pacific Palisades, CA
- 13—**SHANE HELMS**
(-) 210, Raleigh, NC
- 14—**MIKE SANDERS**
(11) 230, Atlanta, GA
- 15—**RENO**
(14) 240, Buffalo, NY

WWF

- 1—**KURT ANGLE**
(1) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
- 2—**CHRIS JERICO**
(6) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- 3—**STEVE AUSTIN**
(7) 252, Victoria, TX

- 4—**TRIPLE-H**
(5) 284, Greenwich, CT
- 5—**THE ROCK**
(3) 272, Miami, FL
- 6—**KANE**
(13) 345, parts unknown
- 7—**CHRIS BENOIT**
(12) 218, Edmonton, Alberta

- 8—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(4) 328, Death Valley, CA
- 9—**RAVEN**
(-) 265, Short Hills, NJ
- 10—**WILLIAM REGAL**
(8) 257, Blackpool, England
- 11—**RIKISHI**
(10) 424, San Francisco, CA

- 12—**BILLY GUNN**
(14) 268, Austin, TX
- 13—**ALBERT**
(-) 320, Boston, MA
- 14—**VAL VENIS**
(15) 250, Oakville, Ontario
- 15—**PERRY SATURN**
(-) 237, Boston, MA

ECW

- 1—**RHINO**
(2) 285, Detroit, MI
- 2—**THE SANDMAN**
(5) 244, Philadelphia, PA
- 3—**JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(4) 227, Waterbury, CT

- 4—**STEVE CORINO**
(1) 219, Sea Isle City, NJ
- 5—**C.W. ANDERSON**
(7) 230, Raleigh, NC
- 6—**JERRY LYNN**
(3) 224, Minneapolis, MN
- 7—**TOMMY DREAMER**
(-) 265, Yonkers, NY

- 8—**NOVA**
(10) 214, Bricktown, NJ
- 9—**SPIKE DUDLEY**
(-) 155, Providence, RI
- 10—**E.Z. MONEY**
(-) 239, Atlantic City, NJ
- 11—**YOSHIHIRO TAJIRI**
(14) 224, Tokyo, Japan

- 12—**SUPER CRAZY**
(11) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
- 13—**MIKEY WHIPWRECK**
(12) 204, New York, NY
- 14—**LITTLE GUIDO MARITATO**
(-) 201, Howard Beach, NY
- 15—**BILVIS WESLEY**
(-) 260, Brick, NJ

INTERNATIONAL

- 1—**GENICHIRO TENRYU**
(1) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 2—**KENSUKE SASAKI**
(2) 251, Tokyo, Japan
- 3—**MASA CHONO**
(10) 235, Tokyo, Japan

- 4—**EL HIJO DEL SANTO**
(-) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
- 5—**JUN AKIYAMA**
(3) 225, Hiroshima, Japan
- 6—**MIKE BARTON**
(-) 263, Austin, TX
- 7—**HECTOR GARZA**
(-) 220, Monterrey, Mexico

- 8—**TOSHIAKI KAWADA**
(8) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
- 9—**MITSU HARU MISAWA**
(12) 228, Ashikaga, Japan
- 10—**PERRO AGUAYO**
(-) 220, Zacatecas, Mexico
- 11—**YUJI NAGATA**
(15) 228, Tokyo, Japan

- 12—**TAIYO KEA**
(-) 235, Honolulu, HI
- 13—**OCTAGON**
(-) 180, Monterrey, Mexico
- 14—**JONNY MOSS**
(-) 240, Egremont, England
- 15—**VADER**
(-) 450, Denver, CO

TOP 15 TAG TEAMS

- 1—**BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
(8) WWF World tag team champions
- 2—**CHRISTIAN & EDGE**
(6) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 3—**SEAN O'HAIRE & CHUCK PALUMBO**
(-) WCW World tag team champions
- 4—**DANNY DORING & ROADKILL**
(9) ECW World tag team champions
- 5—**SATOSHI KOJIMA & HIROYOSHI TENZAN**
(5) IWGP International tag team champions

- 6—**KEVIN NASH & DALLAS PAGE**
(-) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 7—**JEFF & MATT HARDY**
(2) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 8—**YOSHIHIRO TAJIRI & MIKEY WHIPWRECK**
(12) No. 1 contenders: ECW World tag title
- 9—**BRADSHAW & FAAROOQ**
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 10—**KRONIC**
(7) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title

- 11—**BULL BUCHANAN & THE GOODFATHER**
(4) No. 4 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 12—**LO-DOWN**
(-) No. 5 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 13—**BILLY KIDMAN & REY MISTERIO JR.**
(13) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 14—**TOO COOL**
(14) No. 6 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 15—**BUFF BAGWELL & LEX LUGER**
(-) No. 4 contenders: WCW World tag title

These ratings are compiled by the editors with the assistance of promoters, wrestlers, and reporters around the country, and are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue ... Championships highlighted in bold on the "Roll Call Of Champions" have changed hands since our previous issue ... The information under the championship listing indicates the date that champion won the title, who the former champion was, and where the match took place.

For period ended January 22, 2001

ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: TAIYO KEA & JOHNNY SMITH
(January 14, 2001; beat Masa Fuchi & Toshiaki Kawada in tournament final; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN TRIPLE CROWN CHAMPION: GENICHIRO TENRYU
(October 28, 2000; beat Toshiaki Kawada in tournament final; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-PRO WRESTLING UNIVERSAL CHAMPION: DONOVAN MORGAN
(October 7, 2000; from Moondog Moretti; San Francisco, CA)

ALL-PRO WRESTLING UNIVERSAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BOYCE LeGRANDE & ROBERT THOMPSON
(May 6, 2000; beat Jardi Frantz & Vinny Massaro in tournament final; Pacifica, CA)

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: CHEETAH MASTER
(November 25, 2000; from J.J. The Ring Crew Guy; Newark, DE)

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPION: GLEN OSBOURNE
(March 25, 2000; from Ty Street; Wilmington, DE)

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE HAAS BROTHERS
(April 14, from Inferno & Scoot Andrews; New London, CT)

ECW TELEVISION CHAMPION: RHINO
(September 9, 2000; from Kid Kash; Mississauga, Ontario)

ECW WORLD CHAMPION: RHINO
(January 7, 2001; from The Sandman; New York, NY)

ECW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: DANNY DORING & ROADKILL
(December 3, 2000; from Tony Mamaluke & Little Guido Maritato; New York, NY)

IPW HARDCORE WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MIKE SULLIVAN
(May 20, 1999; from Navy SEAL; Crystal River, FL)

IPW HARDCORE WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE SOUTHERN POSSE
(January 13, 2001; won four-way match; St. Petersburg, FL)

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: KENSUKE SASAKI
(January 4, 2001; beat Toshiaki Kawada in tournament final; Tokyo, Japan)

IWGP INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: SATOSHI KOJIMA & HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(July 20, 2000; from Yuji Nagata & Manabu Nakanishi; Sapporo, Japan)

IWGP JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MINORU TANAKA
(October 29, 2000; from Tatsuhito Takaiwa; Kobe, Japan)

MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: GREGORY MARTIN
(January 13, 2001; from Qeenan Creed; Laurel, DE)

MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JIMMY CICERO
(December 6, 2000; won four-way match; Glen Burnie, MD)

MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHRISTOPHER CARMICHAEL & DINO DIVINE
(August 2, 2000; won four-way match; Ocean City, MD)

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MIKE RAPADA
(December 22, 2000; from Sabu; Nashville, TN)

NWA SOUTHWEST TEXAS HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: HOTSTUFF HERNANDEZ
(December 1, 2000; from Al Jackson; North Richland Hills, TX)

NWA SOUTHWEST TEXAS TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: MIKE ANTHONY & AL JACKSON
(January 19, 2001; from Dark Angel & Gravedigger; North Richland Hills, TX)

SOUTHERN STATES WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: STAN SIERRA
(January 14, 2001; from Iron Cross; Kingsport, TN)

SOUTHERN STATES WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: EDDIE BROWNING & JOHN NOBLE
(October 14, 2000; from Beau James & K.C. Thunder; Kingsport, TN)

WCW CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: CHAVO GUERRERO JR.
(December 4, 2000; from Mike Sanders; Lincoln, NE)

WCW HARDCORE CHAMPION: TITLE VACANT
(Most recently held by Meng)

WCW U.S. CHAMPION: SHANE DOUGLAS
(January 14, 2001; from Gen. Rection; Indianapolis, IN)

WCW WORLD CHAMPION: SCOTT STEINER
(November 26, 2000; from Booker T; Milwaukee, WI)

WCW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: SEAN O'HAIRE & CHUCK PALUMBO
(January 14, 2001; from Kevin Nash & Dallas Page; Indianapolis, IN)

WWF EUROPEAN CHAMPION: TEST
(January 22, 2001; from William Regal; Lafayette, LA)

WWF HARDCORE CHAMPION: RAVEN
(January 22, 2001; from Al Snow; Lafayette, LA)

WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: CHRIS JERICHO
(January 21, 2001; from Chris Benoit; New Orleans, LA)

WWF LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: DEAN MALENKO
(April 25, 2000; from Scotty Too Hotty; Charlotte, NC)

WWF WOMEN'S CHAMPION: IVORY
(October 31, 2000; from Lita; Rochester, NY)

WWF WORLD CHAMPION: KURT ANGLE
(October 22, 2000; from The Rock; Albany, NY)

WWF WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE DUDLEY BOYZ
(January 21, 2001; from Christian & Edge; New Orleans, LA)

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